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FEBRUARY 11, 1991

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FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Skin cancer

"This is what we call a shower," says Koos van der Merwe. Is he kidding? I can't tell. Koos, Conservative Party whip in the South African Parliament, is showing me around his house in suburban Johannesburg so I can see "how a typical Afrikaner lives." It's more or less how a typical American suburbanite lives, except for a lot of dead animals on the wall. His "shower" is a shower. Perhaps that's his point: the international fellowship of white people. "We are First World people like yourselves," he says. "The creator has dumped 5 million of us among 30 million Third Worlders." The more he talks, the more he proves the opposite: his mind is unfathomable to me. Does this educated man, who interrupts our chat to give radio interviews in French and Portuguese, really think that "shower" is an Afrikaner word or custom?

Koos, a friendly, bearlike fellow, is so open that you almost feel it's cheating to quote him. He sincerely believes that his case only needs to be laid out to be accepted by any reasonable white person. The CP wants "self-determination": a separate white nation carved out of South Africa, like the black nations of the government's failed "homelands" policy. Koos is coy about where his white homeland would be. Like every political grouping in South Africa at the moment, the Conservatives are maneuvering for position and giving nothing away in advance. But Koos says forthrightly that the whites should have gone for "sacrificial partition" a decade ago. And he hints that he might be prepared to abandon Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Is he serious? I can't tell. That would mean giving up the house Koos is so proud of. It also would mean giving up his black servants, something Koos claims he is prepared to do. But throughout South Africa's history—back to the "Great Trek," when Afrikaners left the English-dominated Cape Colony beginning in 1836—ostensible arrangements for "separate development" have always turned out to be arrangements for white power and black labor. There are conceptual problems too. Koos says he is a nationalist, not a racist. "I don't want to be a red Indian or an Eskimo or a Zulu. I want to be an Afrikaner." But this doesn't explain why he would welcome English-rooted whites—a very different tribe—into his homeland. His explanation, something about merged voter rolls, is unconvincing.

Mainstream and liberal whites in South Africa like you to meet Koos, so you'll have more sympathy for their own various exquisitely modulated positions. Koos claims to represent half the population; a poll last year showed his party at more like 8 percent. A year after President F. W. de Klerk unbanned the African National Congress and committed himself to majority rule, the vast majority of whites accept that apartheid of any variety is dead.

In fact, it's hard to find anyone who didn't actually oppose apartheid all along! Amazing. Roelf Meyer, a government minister working on rewriting the constitution, was elected to the all-white Parliament in 1980 and, "It immediately struck me when I sat down on those green benches that this is unreal." Bright fellow. Another government official says he opposed apartheid "all my life," but managed to keep that opposition undetected through decades of rise through the establishment.

In redesigning the South African government, Meyer says blandly, "It won't do to consider only modern Western theories. We must consider Africa." Meaning? "In Africa, there is not a great history of tolerance." Oh, I get it. And true enough. The concern of whites about their fate under black majority rule is understandable, as is the effort to temper that majority rule with constitutional protections for minorities and individuals.

But blacks are rightly irritated that, in these negotiations, the whites posture as keepers of the flame of Western civilization. After all, in the present constitution, written by and for whites, there is no Bill of Rights, there are no checks and balances. Even overlooking the complete disfranchisement of three-quarters of the population, the current South African government is a virtual elected dictatorship of exactly the sort whites now fear. "Who the hell is Roelf Meyer to tell me, 'I don't want rights to be trampled'?" says Saki Macozoma of the ANC. "But put that aside," he adds, grudgingly.

Black-white relations in South Africa are almost hopelessly poisoned by political oppression and economic disparity. These realities impinge on almost any contact, from a close working association or even romance to sharing an elevator ride, in a way that makes race relations in America seem blissfully easy. Whites enjoy their sunny bourgeois lifestyle, if they can, behind security gates and protected by black security guards who may or may not be trustworthy in the pinch.

And the poison goes beyond the straightforward mixture of hatred and fear. Twice I struck up conversations with black strangers: at a gas station and in a bookstore. Both times our friendly exchange ended with a request, somewhat sheepish, for money. Why not? I have so much; they have so little. And there isn't a sense of shared humanity sufficient even to sustain a two-minute chat, without the reality of the social relationship intruding. Sorry to sound like a Marxist.

To be a white person in South Africa, I suspect, it helps to be either utterly saintly or utterly callous. To be comfortable but well-meaning—my own preferred moral stance—is a recipe for almost certain frustration, both as a practical matter and psychologically.

Discourse between even enlightened whites and blacks strikes the American ear as dismally arch, and maybe thirty years out of date. A liberal investment banker, showing off, asks a bewildered elderly servant to give a visiting American his political views. Then he thinks to introduce us: "Walter, this is Mr. Kinsley." Cringe. A debonair young black barrister who is also a leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, a group to the left of the ANC, is explaining the PAC's notorious slogan of "one settler, one bullet." Settler is not a racial term, you see; it means someone who refuses to consider himself African. He turns to his middle-aged white secretary: "You're not a settler, are you, my dear?" She: "I hope not, my love."

South Africans will be lucky if they can untangle this mess over thirty years. Meanwhile, nature as well conspires to make South Africa unsupportable for whites. Remember that hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica? South Africans say it's moved over their territory. Half an hour in the sun this year equals two hours a year ago. White people in Cape Town swallow Vitamin A tablets and agitate for mandatory caps for school kids. White school kids, that is.

One black activist claims that half the whites have acquired foreign passports, just in case. "They have two citizenships; we don't have even one." I found that hard to believe. But the very next day I met a young, white, third-generation South African who gave me the standard liberal "I am an African, too" rap, bragged about joining the ANC shortly after it was legalized, then happened to reveal that he has an Irish passport. (One grandparent was Irish.) He got it to travel with, he says, after a Belgian border guard used his South African passport as toilet paper.

Like all of us, white South Africans just want to be loved. But it's gonna cost them. How much is a question for next week, unless events intrude.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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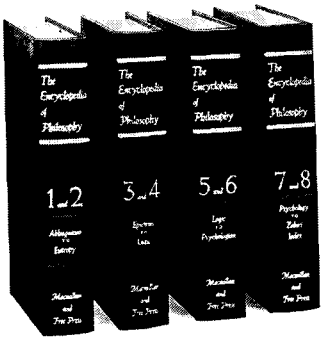

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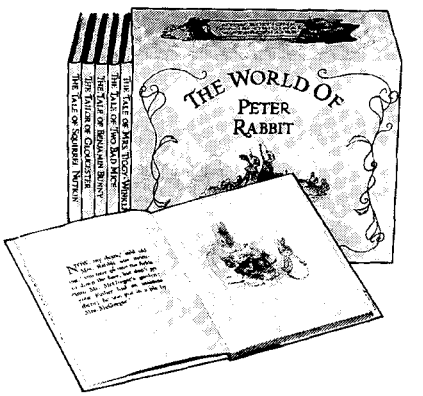

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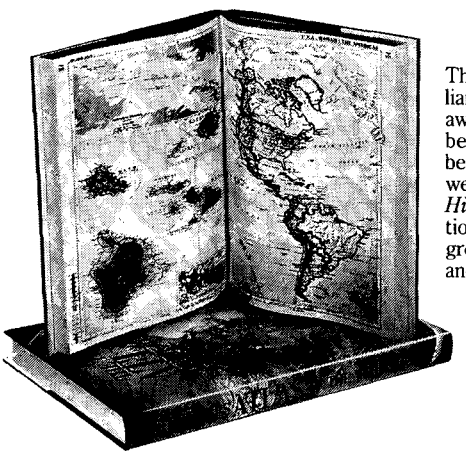

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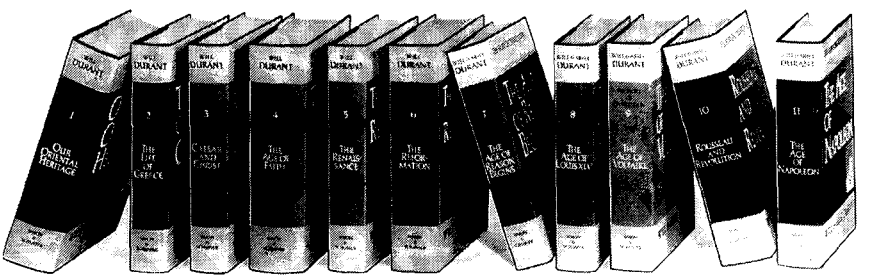

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CORRESPONDENCE

'Spy' stories

To the editors:

In "Spy's Demise" (December 24) Joe Nocera said that in recent negotiations for the sale of *Spy*, an investor group "originally agreed to pay $5 million for the magazine." In fact, the investor group originally agreed to pay $4 million for a majority interest in the company, and still proposes to pay $4 million for a majority interest in the company. Mr. Nocera's assertion that "the price has since dropped twice" is also untrue.

Mr. Nocera said that under the proposed deal, a payout would go to our limited partner Steven Schragis "and several other limited partners." In fact, the proposed payout would go to Mr. Schragis and every one of his thirty-two fellow limited partners.

"In an exquisite twist," Mr. Nocera wrote, "the deal [to sell *Spy*] nearly collapsed after the *Spy* troika made a last-minute demand that Mr. Schragis share some of the $1 million with them. Mr. Schragis told them he would rather see the deal killed than accede to such a demand." No such demand was ever made of Mr. Schragis or of anyone else, and so no such refusal was ever received—as Mr. Nocera would have been told if he had ever talked to us about the proposed deal.

"An attempt to turn *Spy* into a national publication," according to Mr. Nocera, "failed badly." Quite the reverse is true: two years after our debut in 1986, 89 percent of our advertising revenues were coming from national advertisers; that fraction now stands at 95 percent. *Spy*'s circulation, which has sextupled in four years, is indisputably national: 72 percent of our readers live outside New York.

Mr. Nocera suggested that we obtained a compromising letter written by *Vanity Fair*'s editor Tina Brown but then refrained from publishing it for more than a year, provoked into vengeance by Ms. Brown's public twitting of *Spy* last February. This was his single example of our supposed policy of editorial vendettas, and it was wrong. In fact, the day we were given a copy of Ms. Brown's letter last May we started preparing it for publication, and it appeared in our next issue.

Conversely, Mr. Nocera wrote that "people friendly with Carter or Andersen—like [*Rolling Stone*'s] Jann Wenner . . . seemed out of range of *Spy*'s cannon fire." In fact, we have repeatedly run unflattering depictions of our supposed sacred cow—a story about Mr. Wenner at a grotesque gathering of well-known plutocrats, a story about Mr. Wenner abandoning his own staff Christmas party in favor of a hunting trip with rich and famous people, an item just last month about Mr. Wenner's name-dropping, and so on.

As for Mr. Nocera's more subjective interpretations and conclusions, we will rely on TNR readers' good sense to judge the plausibility of those, particularly his central premise—that we launched a small, quirky, satirical magazine in order to get rich.

KURT ANDERSEN
GRAYDON CARTER
TOM PHILLIPS
New York, New York

The writers are, respectively, the founding editors of *Spy* and its publisher.

Joseph Nocera replies:

Most of my alleged errors are, in fact, simply different shadings on the same set of facts. For instance, although only in Manhattan would entrepreneurs deny wanting to make money, it is true that the overriding goal of Messrs. Andersen, Carter, and Phillips in the end was to save the magazine, even after they knew they weren't going to get rich in the process. I made this point, but not as sharply as *Spy* would have liked.

I also garbled one anecdote. Messrs. Andersen, Carter, and Phillips did not, in fact, demand money from Mr. Schragis at the last minute. Instead, they tangled with Mr. Schragis over the issue of employment contracts for themselves, which they insisted on, and which Mr. Schragis vehemently opposed. During the final negotiations between *Spy*'s founders and the group buying the magazine, held after my article was published, the price came down an additional $200,000 from the $4.2 million figure I reported, and the employment contracts were eliminated.

Language barriers

To the editors:

Regarding Alan Wolfe's "The Return of the Melting Pot" (December 31): whether or not "nearly all the original immigrants wanted to be as American as fast as possible," they were not always eager to give up their native languages, nor was the sacrifice invariably required of them. Languages other than English were widely used as a primary means of instruction in nine-teenth-century American schools, both public and private, particularly in the Midwest. The historian Heinz Kloss has estimated that in 1900 more than 600,000 American children (about 4 percent of the elementary school population) were receiving instruction partly or exclusively in German; and the proportion of students in all "bilingual" classrooms was probably as high as or higher than it is now.

The uniform insistence on English-language "immersion" was imposed later, in reaction to nativist hysteria (by 1920 more than thirty states had laws on the books that either restricted or forbade foreign-language instruction in public and private schools). Students immersed in English did not often resurface; in 1908 in New York City, where bilingual programs were rare, only 13 percent of immigrant children enrolled in elementary school went on to high school, against 32 percent of white children whose parents were native-born. A number of these dropouts did succeed in later life, of course—formal schooling was not so crucial then as now. But immersion can scarcely be credited for their achievements, nor is there much evidence that it works any better now. (The El Paso "submersion" program that Mr. Wolfe offers as an example of a successful alternative to bilingual education in fact included a substantial bilingual component.)

As Mr. Wolfe notes, all the evidence suggests that recent immigrants will learn English one way or another, whether or not we "insist" on it (a 1985 Rand Corporation study reported that 95 percent of Hispanics born in America are fluent in English, and that 50 percent of the second generation no longer speak Spanish). But it is pointless to make the process of assimilation more difficult than it has to be. No one will learn English any more quickly, and society at large will have to pick up the tab for the resulting attrition.

GEOFFREY NUNBERG
Stanford, California

The writer is a consulting associate professor of linguistics at Stanford University.

High criticism

To the editors:

As critical as Mark Stevens's "Low and Behold" (December 24) is of the essay I contributed to the book of readings that accompanied the Museum of Modern Art's "High & Low" exhibition, so far he is the only writer among those arguing for a more conservative view of modernism to define straightforwardly his terms and thoughtfully tackle the is-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 11, 1991

WAR OF NERVES

"Purely an act of terror," President Bush said of the Iraqi attacks on Tel Aviv last week, with sympathy for Israel that seemed sincere. An act of terror it certainly was; but not purely. It was also a calculated tactic in a war, a military operation with a strategic objective. In this respect, it came as no surprise. Still, it concentrated many minds, even some minds that generally prefer not to concentrate on the historical experience of the Jewish state in its brutal environment.

The Scud attacks on Israel must be understood historically and strategically. Historically, they are final proof—and final proof, alas, seems always to be necessary—of the extent to which Israel lives dangerously. Iraq makes war with the sheikdoms and Tel Aviv is hit: that is the logic of Israel's region, for which any convulsion ends well that ends in Israeli suffering. It was impossible, as the first reports of the Iraqi attack came across, to resist certain morbid truths about Israeli history. Indeed, about Jewish history: we understand as well as anybody that the Holocaust lends itself to political demagoguery, but there was something sickening about the sight of Jews reaching for gas masks. There were, of course, decisive differences. Last time there was gas and no masks. This time there were masks and no gas. And this time there is the power to strike back. And as of this writing the nerve gas has not come, which may be grounds to hope that Saddam Hussein finally lacks the ability to deliver it. Still, a nerve was touched, a memory was revived.

Strategically, the attack on Israel was Iraq's ace in the hole, or so Saddam thought. The attack had a strictly military objective: to provoke an Israeli retaliation that would wreak political and psychological havoc in the camp of Iraq's enemies. The ploy failed; even after the attack on Tel Aviv that finally claimed lives, Israel stayed brilliantly cool. Israel's refusal to be baited is an emotional and strategic accomplishment of great magnitude. This may turn out to have been the most important failure of Iraqi war planning. For Saddam's feckless attacks have had the following consequences: they have healed a rift of unprecedented proportions between Israel and the United States, and drawn the two countries into an operational intimacy of which they had been wary since the beginning of their relationship; they have created a climate of understanding for Israel's vulnerability that has never existed before (the Syrians and the Soviets are condoling); they have exposed as a tattered illusion the pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic view of the Arab world, the view that the interest of any particular Arab state or society is, or should be, finally subordinate to the interest of all the Arab states and all of Arab society; and they have isolated the Palestinians as they have never been isolated before, bringing down upon them the opprobrium of even some of their supporters.

The collapse of the credibility of the PLO, and more generally of the Palestinians, probably does not trouble Saddam overmuch. He was, after all, toying murderously with their wretchedness, hitching a ride on their fate. But the Palestinian reaction to the attack on Israel should give pause, because it may turn out to be the most important political development in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has become an article of faith in almost every quarter that after the war with Iraq will come the peace with Israel. War euphoria is giving way to peace euphoria: *The Washington Post* concluded an editorial last week with a moist reference to "the diplomacy that will be necessary to make over the Middle East." To make over the Middle East! Surely no more mistaken conclusion could be drawn from what we are now witnessing in the Middle East; for what we are seeing is precisely the perdurability of the region's violent, fevered, tribal, bellicose traditions. For this reason, again, the Palestinian

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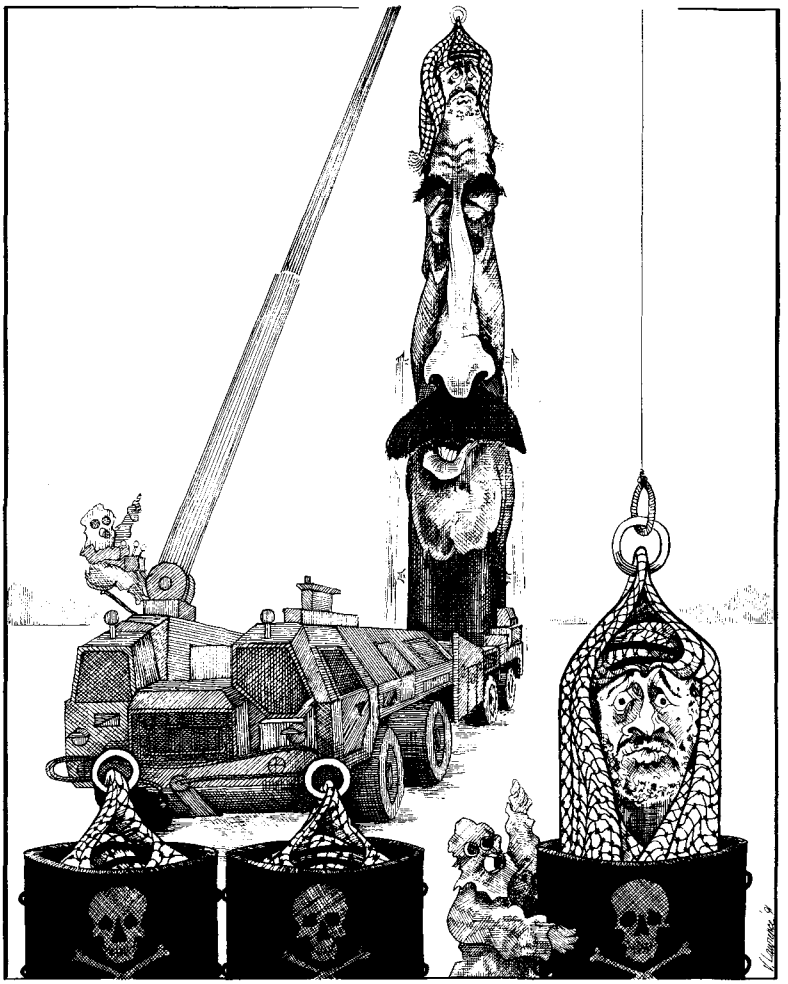
response to the attacks on Israel must not be allowed to disappear into the vaporizings of pundits and politicians.

Their response was, in a word, joy. "We were happy. A little scared maybe, but mainly happy," a shopkeeper in Ramallah told the *Post*. The grotesqueness of the situation can hardly be exaggerated: the Palestinians in gas masks hoping that gas falls on the Israelis who have given them their gas masks. Or, to put the matter in political terms, the Israelis will soon be expected to sue for peace with people who wanted them gassed. And those people are to be found not only in the street; they include also the leadership of the PLO, in Tunis and in the territories. As a prominent Palestinian on the West Bank, Professor Hanan Ashrawi, observed, "The war has increased support for Saddam tremendously. People now see him as an underdog, or as some almost mythical figure from Arab culture and history: the man who says, 'I will die fighting, but I will maintain my pride and dignity.' And who do they have to compare him with? By contrast, the other Arab leaders appear to be subservient to the West, trying to save themselves."



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

What an extraordinary, unwitting admission. Do the Palestinians really want to paint Saddam Hussein as the embodiment of "Arab culture and history"? They, or their intellectuals, had better not complain, then, when Westerners hold the same harsh and simple view. More to the point, is it really an expression of cowardice or treason when people try "to save themselves"? Is it really preferable, morally and historically, to "die fighting"? One thing is certain: if the Palestinians do not decide to save themselves, they will not be saved. If they do not grasp that Israel will not concede to their political enfranchisement as long as they wish Israel dead, they will find no political enfranchisement. The Palestinians have nobody but themselves to blame for the revulsion that many people are feeling for their support of Saddam. They are backing fascists again. (They are also backing the man who just assassinated their beloved Abu Iyad.) We have been hearing a lot, from the PLO's apologists in the media, about "the politics of despair." But the politics of despair is really the despair of politics. And without politics, the Palestinians will continue to proceed nowhere, until they are the last occupied people on earth. Despair, in any case, however real and long and great, is hardly an excuse for the support of a regime that has shown itself, in its last war and now in this war, to be genocidal.

All this does not mean, of course, that Saddam's failed attacks on Israel have relieved Israel of the Palestinian problem. And there will certainly be demands by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and America's other Arab partners that the United States turn to the Palestinians when it turns away from the Iraqis—at which point the Shamir government will present the Bush administration with its IOU for its decision not to retaliate against Iraq and thereby interfere with America's war.

But Shamir had better come with more, as some younger Likud members of the Knesset are apparently beginning to realize. The worsening of Israeli-Palestinian relations makes the conflict not only more difficult, but also more necessary, to solve. There is the chance that with the PLO leadership internationally in ruins, and the Palestinians satisfied that Israel has been rattled, they will find themselves in the mood in which Anwar Sadat found himself after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and think about negotiating.

But there is also the chance, the good chance, that they will grow sullen and throw more stones and keep the maximalist faith. That a conflict must be solved does not mean that it will be solved. Meanwhile, Israel's vulnerability has been bleakly and vividly clarified, not least in the West Wing. It is sometimes a slim reed, but what Israel can now appeal to, after the televised near-horrors of last week, is America's memory. We have seen, in all of our homes, and in real time, as the military says, what it is like. ●

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NOTEBOOK

GRIN AND BEAR IT: Even when nuclear freeze was a hot issue, humans largely ignored the threat that an atomic apocalypse might pose to our furry friends. The Fall 1990 issue of *Bear News*, out of Missoula, Montana, offers a timely corrective. The grizzly bear's window of vulnerability, according to the journal, opens and closes with the seasons:

> If foreign missiles were to sail into central Montana in the heat of summer, the firestorms would ignite all the forests in the semicircle of mountains west, south, and east of the missile base at Great Falls.... Bears that were not vaporized by the blasts or consumed in the subsequent firestorms would face a scorched and poisoned terrain.

In the winter, when warm dens double as bomb shelters, "no bears would be vaporized and few or none burned, but all would find a world of hurt when they emerged to face radioactive summer after summer...." The harsh truth is that "nuclear war could wipe out Montana's grizzlies—and much else." On the other hand, it would cut down on inconsiderate tourists littering ursine habitats with styrofoam coffee cups.

OUT WITH THE BATH WATER: Ben Wattenberg is of many minds about American population change. In 1974 Mr. Wattenberg, now a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote cheerfully in *The Real America* that the population was going to shrink. He speculated there would be only 185 million Americans in 2160. This would mean a higher standard of living for everyone: "In short, unprecedented individual affluence ... more people with more spending money in the massive majority middle." In 1986, however, Mr. Wattenberg decided that the "Birth Dearth" was a bad thing, which imperiled Western civilization, since "non-democratic and/or non-modern peoples" were growing faster than their opposites in America and Europe. He called for a public campaign to get baby boomers to reproduce more aggressively. Now, in his new book, *The First Universal Nation*, Mr. Wattenberg announces that there is a new baby boom in America, and that the population isn't going to shrink after all. This, he asserts, is a good thing: "The United States has a strong chance to remain Number One ... to become the most influential nation in history." The only permutation left to come: Mr. Wattenberg's prediction that America's rapid population growth will have disastrous consequences for civilization as we know it. Based on census bureau data, we're betting he will reach this conclusion by 1999. ●

The Latvians fight back.

RIGA MORTIS

By Conor O'Clery

RIGA, LATVIA

At three a.m. on Thursday, January 17, the Lutheran cathedral behind Riga's barricades was full of sleeping people. Some were lying on pews. Others were so exhausted they slept sitting up. A few were stretched out on beds in the emergency operating room in a side chapel. Someone turned up a radio. Then others sat up and switched on their own portable radios. The whole cathedral stirred. The first reports on the Gulf war were coming in. It was the worst possible news for the Latvians. "Moscow has a free hand now," said a weary young man with a gas mask attached to his belt.

Three days later the sky over Riga was filled with red and green tracer bullets as Soviet Interior Ministry troops, known colloquially as "black berets," stormed the five-story Latvian Interior Ministry building to seize its store of arms. Five people were killed. Some of the injured were carried into the cathedral for medical treatment.

The barricades in Latvia's capital had gone up the previous Sunday, to protect the parliament and radio building, which are situated amid the cobbled streets, old churches, and medieval warehouses of Old Town. Double rows of trucks, tractors, snow plows, and fire engines were parked across all entrances and exits, leaving room only for pedestrians. Until the shooting on January 20, there was a festival atmosphere in the little squares: pop groups jostled next to male choirs and folk dancers throughout the frosty nights. With typical Latvian efficiency, two shoulder-high blocks of granite weighing several tons, brought in to block a narrow street, were lowered gently onto wooden rollers so as not to damage the cobblestones. A street billboard was transformed into an exhibition of political satire as amateur artists pinned up savage cartoons mocking President Gorbachev. People threw coins and cigarette butts at a rag doll tied to a chair and labeled "Communist Party soldier."

Latvians were united as never before. "If we don't defend our freedom now, it's the end. Pray for our freedom," said Oswaldi Gasyons, a white-coated, 66-year-old doctor who had come to Riga from a village ten miles away. "Why am I here?" asked a middle-aged man, Andris Mednis, as he squeezed through a gap in the trucks with his wife. "We need freedom. Where else would I be?" Latvians are almost a minority in their own country, where immigrant Russians

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increasingly dominate. If they fail now and Russian immigration continues, they believe they will never have another chance. In the stone parliament building deputies sat night and day in emergency session. In the parliament press room exhausted Latvian youngsters recruited from émigré families in Canada, the United States, and England put out endless press releases in English.

Two factors caused the Latvians to mobilize. The first was the emergence of something called a National Salvation Committee on January 14, similar to the one in Lithuania that had welcomed Soviet troops. Its co-chairman was Alfreds Rubiks, leader of the pro-Moscow Latvian Communist Party. The same day General Fyodor Kuzmin, commander of Soviet forces in the Baltics, demanded that Latvia too should submit to Soviet power. The second was the support in Moscow for the army activity in Vilnius. Any doubts that it was carried out by a rogue military unit were dispelled when President Gorbachev gave it his backing. Latvia seemed destined to be next.

The Soviet media's response to the events in Vilnius was also ominous. After the appointment of the ultraconservative Leonid Kravchenko as chairman of the Soviet Broadcasting Committee, Soviet television gave one-sided accounts of events in the Baltics. It conferred legitimacy on the salvation committees by speaking of them as alternative sources of power. It showed twice on Leningrad television a documentary program on the Vilnius violence made by Alexander Nevzorov, the host of the current affairs program "600 seconds." Nevzorov, who projects a tough-guy image, wears a leather jacket, and calls himself a monarchist, had gained popularity by exposing official corruption in Leningrad. But he shocked his followers by glorifying the role of the paratroopers in Vilnius, portraying them as frightened boys facing an armed mob. To Western reporters at the scene this was fiction. To the Baltic nationalists it was alarming evidence that the Kremlin was preparing public opinion for more. Radio Riga called Nevzorov's program "terrorist propaganda." The announcer said: "The Soviet empire in its last wave of terror is spreading lies."

Moscow's threat to the Baltics is most keenly felt through the black berets. Officially they're answerable to Soviet Interior Minister Boris Pugo. In Latvia they number 120 and are given inflated salaries and special apartments by the Latvian Communist Party, according to a deserter, who expressed his remorse after the black berets opened fire on a Latvian government car in Riga on January 16. They killed 39-year-old Roberts Murnieks, a government driver, with a 5.6-mm bullet from an automatic weapon.

Baltic nationalists believe that the military activity now under way is all carried out by such units loyal to the Party, rather than the army as such. Latvian deputy Linards Mucins suggested that the paratroopers in Vilnius were under the command of the KGB and not the regular army, a theory that was given some credence when the identity of the soldier who died in the attack on the television tower was revealed. He was Lieutenant V. Shatskikh, one of a "small number" of KGB officers sent to Lithuania "to help stabilize the situation," according to the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia.*

Moscow's game plan in the Baltics appears to have been as follows. Big price rises were due to go into effect in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia early in January, rises imposed by the local governments, intent on free market reform. This would be taken by pro-Moscow Russians as a signal to organize demonstrations against the local parliaments, to establish salvation committees, and to take over the parliaments, helped by the black berets. Riga may have been singled out as the first to fall, which would leave Lithuania and Estonia isolated on either side.

However, things did not go quite according to plan. Lithuania exploded first, and Moscow's reaction to the events in Vilnius merely stiffened resistance and left the Lithuanian government still in control of local police, ministries, internal transport, and radio and television. In Latvia, moreover, Russian support for Moscow did not materialize. Only 10,000 turned out for a big anti-government rally on January 15 in Riga organized by the pro-Moscow Edinstvo (unity) group. The popular front majority in the Latvian parliament had succeeded in antagonizing much of the Russian-speaking population by not including any of its deputies in the government it formed last year, but the Russians appeared to have little stomach for a return to totalitarianism either. Many of the nurses in the cathedral were Russian volunteers. Dozens of Russians lined up with Latvians at the post office to send telegrams of protest to Gorbachev when he attacked Latvian nationalists as bandits in a televised speech. A Russian engineer in line, Yuri Teryokin, said, "Ten percent of the Russians in Latvia support Soviet rule, 30 percent are for independence, and the rest are indifferent."

Moreover, the Baltic governments were flexible on economic policy. The Latvian parliament froze the recent price increases, killing any idea of a quick move to a market economy, and voted to suspend a November 14 decree restricting services to military personnel that had infuriated the Soviet army. None of these complications actually prevented the black berets' attack, of course, but they made Moscow's task of control that much more difficult. It's getting harder.

The Latvians have one powerful friend in Moscow: Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Many say their future rests on his ability to influence events. Rumors circulated in Riga that Yeltsin's plea to Russian soldiers not to open fire on unarmed civilians had prompted heated debates in military barracks, but there was no evidence of this. More important has been the effect on Russians living in Riga. They began to see the struggle as one that could eventually involve democracy in Russia as well,

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to which they still felt considerable loyalty. Some Russians joined the defenders on the barricades, draping a huge sign across three trucks with the words "Russians, under the flag of Russia your fate will be decided." Above it were hoisted several red, white, and blue flags of prerevolutionary Russia.

The belief is growing in the Soviet Union that what is happening in Latvia is not just the crushing of independence but the stirrings of a civil war against communism, which will one day erupt in Russia itself.

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CAIRO POSTCARD

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

By Robert Bingham

The night before the bombs dropped in Baghdad, I was gambling in the Marriott Casino in Cairo. There were a lot of Kuwaitis, and their game of choice was roulette. Some were dressed in gray robes with red and white *kefiyehs,* others wore Western suits. All were gambling hard. They leaned over the smooth green of the roulette table and scattered chips over the board, and well after the Egyptian croupier had said, "No more bets, please," they still laid down chips—right up to the instant when the small white ball fell out of its worn wooden groove onto the number. I was making one-dollar bets with red chips, while the Kuwaitis, joined by a Japanese businessman, placed their bets in increments of ten, fifty, and a hundred, forming miniature Towers of Pisa of blue, yellow, and gray.

The Marriott in Cairo used to be a royal palace and is now a luxury refugee camp for about 400 wealthy Kuwaitis, including members of the royal family and their entourages. These are the people who blew out of Kuwait City in a caravan of Mercedes, leaving their less fortunate compatriots in the hands of Saddam Hussein's troops. Indolent and bored, they lounge around the hotel lobby sipping lemon squash and thumbing worry beads, waiting for the Americans and the allied coalition to bail them out.

If the Kuwaitis didn't put up much of an armed resistance against the superior Iraqi forces, they certainly have planned a vigorous public relations campaign in the wake of their country's occupation. I met here an American-educated Pakistani named Zaab Sethna, who works for the Rendon Group, an international public relations firm based in Washington. Armed with a satellite phone and a fax machine, Sethna helped the exiled Kuwaitis' image in Cairo by organizing a made-for-TV midnight vigil for the cause. Tapes have been offered, with indifferent success, to the Gulf-hungry networks. The Kuwait royal family, I was told, has chartered a private plane earmarked for journalists who will fly into Kuwait City the minute it's liberated, and a 747 is reportedly waiting in the wings for the Kuwaiti elite to ride home in once the dust has settled. All this, of course, hinges on the success of the coalition's forces in the Gulf, pretty good odds in many Kuwaitis' minds these days—which brings me back to the roulette table.

Things were not going well for those circled around the green felt. The white ball was trickling onto numbers mysteriously uncovered by Kuwaiti chips. There was angry talk and a lot of cigarette smoke. Then I won quite a bit of money on three, my favorite number. Hoping for some luck, the Kuwaitis began to piggyback on my bets. Then Rick Kaplan, the executive producer of ABC's "Prime Time Live," waltzed up to the table and put $30 down on number two. The next spin of the roulette ball ended its circular path on . . . two. Kaplan cashed in his chips, but I stayed to see what the Kuwaitis would do. They spread their chips around the table, and just when the man said, "No more wagers, please," their hands rushed to place bets on number two, piling up an array of different colored chips. What the hell, they seemed to be thinking—why not hedge your bet on an American one more time?

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War politics in Washington.

DOGFIGHT

By Morton Kondracke

> "For those who wonder what we spent all that money on during the defense buildup of the 1980s, well, now we know. The awesome performance of the Air Force and Navy planes over Iraq and Kuwait is live demonstration that those who have made careers of trashing 'the Pentagon,' dumping on the 'high-tech toys the generals love' should find another line of work."
>
> —column by Patrick Buchanan, January 21

The Gulf war was not a week old and political credit and blame already were being dished around. Republicans were digging through old congressional debates to find evidence that Democrats had tried to cut or kill some of the high-tech weapons performing so spectacularly in the Gulf, while Democrats were countering that many of these systems—notably, Tomahawk cruise missiles and Stealth fighters—were actually developed during the Carter administration. But the Republicans'

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bigger aim, as Buchanan's column suggests, was to heap lasting discredit on (mainly Democratic) critics of the military and of the Gulf war. (The latter, ironically, included Buchanan himself until the eve of battle.)

Naturally, it's too early to tell who will win this political war over the Gulf, but the odds favor the Republicans. First, Democrats overwhelmingly opposed this (so far) popular war, in keeping with a twenty-five-year trend that makes them America's "peace party" and the Republicans the "war party." Second, if the war turns out well, it's likely that the Democrats' chances of taking the White House will suffer yet another blow over the issue of "strength." Third, the Republicans will get credit for building the quantities of weapons America has needed in the Gulf, even though some "defense Democrats" helped along the way. And fourth, the war could lead to a new burst of life for such politically troubled, Republican-supported weapons systems as the Strategic Defense Initiative and the B-2 Stealth bomber.

The Gulf war marks a decisive point that American politics has been heading toward for some time: this is America's first real Republican war in this century. World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam all were entered into by Democratic presidents. Vietnam converted the Democrats, fundamentally, into an anti-war, anti-defense-spending, anti-military-intervention party—the "peace" party. Obviously, not all Democrats fit this description, but the party's center of gravity, as expressed in presidential primary campaigns and congressional votes, surely does.

The Republicans, meanwhile, abandoned isolationism for anti-communism after World War II, then gradually became the party of "national strength" and a "strong defense." Ronald Reagan was the epitome of national self-assertion, but his wars—Lebanon, Grenada, Nicaragua, and Libya—all were small, as was Bush's Panama invasion. Not only was the current big war started by Bush; it was supported almost unanimously by Republicans in Congress and opposed by all but ten of the fifty-five Democrats in the Senate, by two-thirds of all Democrats in the House, and by all the 1992 Democratic presidential prospects except Senator Al Gore of Tennessee and Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, who said after the fact that he would have supported the president.

Non-elected Democratic foreign policy gurus were almost as unanimously against Bush as legislators were. Jimmy Carter and all his top advisers, including Defense Secretary Harold Brown, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, opposed Bush, as did Vietnam-era officials Robert McNamara, Ted Sorensen, and McGeorge Bundy, and Michael Dukakis's chief foreign policy coordinator, Madeleine Albright. Dúkakis and 1984 Democratic candidate Walter Mondale stayed silent about the war.

In congressional debate and on op-ed pages, many Democrats claimed that they were not opposed in principle to using force against Saddam Hussein, only against doing so before an ample opportunity had been given for sanctions to work. And some Republicans, like Senate leader Bob Dole, asserted that they were authorizing the use of force as a means to avoid war. Still, the rhetoric used by most Democrats was strongly anti-war, and that used by Republicans favored war over sanctions. Suggestions were floated in the Senate on compromise wording that would have authorized force after a year or eighteen months of sanctions, but Democratic leaders rejected the idea.

Regardless of arguments to the contrary, the public has long seen the Democrats as the party of "weakness" and the Republicans as the party of "strength." In election after election, it is a key reason Republicans win the presidency and Democrats lose. In 1988 ABC News exit polls showed Bush favored by just five percentage points among the 41 percent of voters who thought economics was the most important issue in the campaign; but he was ahead 88 percent to 12 percent among the quarter of the electorate that regarded foreign policy and defense as most important. Foreign policy has favored the Republican candidate in every campaign since 1964, and as late as last November Americans said that by a margin of 29 points they depended upon Republicans, rather than Democrats, to give the country as strong a defense as it needs. That is the best showing Democrats had made in a decade; in 1982 they trailed the Republicans on this polling question by 40 points.

In the early, heady days of combat in the Gulf, House Democrats and their aides confessed to some "soul-searching" about whether they'd voted correctly on the war. "People on our side are concerned about whether they are going to get demagogued once again about being wimpy," one leadership aide said. Liberals hope that having voted the same way as such perceived hawks as Senators Sam Nunn and David Boren will give them some political cover. They also hope that in 1992 the public will be ready for a new definition of "national strength" besides the traditional military one. The likelihood is, though, that Nunn will be discredited by his alignment with party liberals, and that in an era of continuing world instability, national security will mean what it always has meant. According to Al From, an associate of Nunn and director of the pro-defense Democratic Leadership Conference, "If this turns out well for Bush, this will go down as the crisis everyone wondered whether he could handle. The question will have been answered and we Democrats will be a sideshow. We are hostages to fortune now. So is Bush."

One might guess that those Democrats who voted with the president on the war would at least gain credit among their colleagues for courage. Not so: they are the subject of muttering. Gore is accused by colleagues of agonizing too much in public before deciding how to vote. Representative Steve Solarz, it's said, probably has hurt his chances to be secretary of state someday. (Actually, he has probably enhanced them, if the war

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proves successful.) Representative Les Aspin, according to House aides, probably will have more votes cast against him for House Armed Services chairman, although he'll keep the post. Representative Robert Torricelli reportedly will be denied a coveted seat on the House Intelligence Committee for attacking fellow Democrats in public.

Another front in the partisan battle over the Gulf has to do with which party favored (or sought to kill) which weapons system. There are a few clear cases. In 1985 Senate Democrats (including Nunn and Gore) tried to block deployment of the USS *Wisconsin*, the battleship from which Tomahawk missiles are being fired against Iraq. Upgrading Patriot air defense missiles to shoot down incoming missiles had as its great defender then Senator Dan Quayle. But overall, most weapons being used in the Gulf are not so much Reagan-Republican weapons or Carter-Democratic weapons as products of a fifteen-year development process requiring bipartisan administration and congressional support—sometimes against the opposition of the armed services. Almost every weapon was subject to criticism that it didn't work or cost far more than expected.

The Tomahawk cruise missile and F-117A Stealth fighter plane both were pushed into production by Harold Brown in the Carter administration, especially after Carter decided to abandon the B-1 bomber. The B-1 instantly became one of the Republicans' favorite weapons, and Republicans excoriated cruise missiles and Stealth for a time. The Reagan administration revived the B-1—which has played no part whatever in the Gulf—but also sustained cruise missiles and the F-117. Deployment of sea-launched cruise missiles was opposed for arms control reasons by 1984 Democratic contenders Mondale and Gary Hart, but also by Republican Senators David Durenberger and Charles Mathias. Reagan kept the missiles alive, but agreed to eliminate ground-launched cruise missiles as part of the 1988 INF treaty with Moscow.

Meanwhile, continued Stealth fighter production was opposed in the 1980s by the Air Force, which preferred the Advanced Tactical Fighter that is still subject to controversy and won't be on-line until after the year 2000. The Stealth plane was saved by Reagan's national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, and by Nunn, according to Senate aides. Congress often forces the Pentagon to buy systems it does not want—sometimes for pork barrel reasons, sometimes out of military judgment. Such systems include hospital ships now deployed in the Gulf, the Marine Corps' Harrier jets, the infrared spy satellite system operating over Iraq, and the Patriot.

Both Democrats and Republicans give Reagan credit for "filling the bins"—buying more weapons of all types—but Democrats concede nothing to Reagan's defense secretary, Caspar Weinberger, who they say (and many defense contractors and military officers agree) was incapable of saying no to any system. Many Democrats give Reagan credit for enhancing the pay and benefits of America's all-volunteer armed forces—"the hollow Army" of the Carter years—but they say the process started with legislation introduced in 1980 by Nunn and Republican Senator John Warner.

The lesson of this seems to be that the system works, however messily. America has a modern, high-tech military thanks to a combination of serious Republicans and moderate defense Democrats, who are capable of making choices for the future. Ideologues and faddists of both parties ought to be viewed with suspicion. Hart and the so-called "defense reformers" wanted to build low-tech ships and planes, and they seem to have been discredited. So have reflexive critics of the "military-industrial complex," such as Representatives Ronald Dellums, Barbara Boxer, Jim Traficant, and Patricia Schroeder, and Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry. But so too have advocates of early umbrella-style strategic defenses and the B-1 bomber.

New tests of the system are in the offing. SDI advocates will be back for major new funding, claiming that the Patriot missile's success against Iraqi Scuds proves the case for space-based strategic defense as well as ground-based anti-missiles. (Actually, according to Aspin, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, with its 30,000 nuclear warheads intact, may help SDI even more.) The success of Stealth fighters will be used to win approval of the B-2 Stealth bomber, the A-12 Navy attack plane cancelled by Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, and the Advanced Tactical Fighter. The bipartisan system can separate the good from the bad. Most Democrats may be too risk-averse ever to be president, but many of them make excellent legislators. ●

JERUSALEM POSTCARD

HOLED UP

By Anna Husarska

To watch a TV journalist report from Israel with his gas mask on is certainly impressive. It is even more so when you watch it with your own mask on. This was the case for most of us here, as we were trying to determine whether we could leave our sealed rooms or if the alert was still on. Those who do not have cable TV called their relatives in the States. Over the Scud weekend, the usual rate of 3,000 calls an hour to the United States skyrocketed to 750,000, and the Bezeq Telephone Company placed huge ads in the dailies: PLEASE KEEP IT SHORT.

The first time we had to go underground we were all beginners, and it was a bit hectic. A shortsighted elderly man had to give up his glasses to wear the mask, and

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mothers were counting their children because in our masks we all looked alike. But by the fourth alert on the second night the random group in our shelter was a familiar team. Not many kept their masks on. Two teenage sisters never even put theirs on because they wanted to eat potato chips.

Here in Jerusalem the missiles have not fallen. In Tel Aviv they have—and people have been killed and wounded. There, I guess, the potato chips will have to wait. But there as here, the black rubber masks are omnipresent in streets and minds. The morning after the first missiles were launched against Israel I spoke with the popular writer David Grossman. He told me of his two sons, aged 5 and 8, who a few days earlier had argued with him and his wife and decided to run away from home: "They were ringing the doorbell a few minutes later asking for their gas masks. For these boys the fear of a gas attack has entered their genes at a very young age and will probably stay forever." Grossman said that he sealed the windows with tape while his 8-year-old, Jonathan, watched him. As a child, Grossman had watched his own father do the same thing during the Six-Day War. And for older people, the memories go further back. I dared not ask what the group visiting the exhibitions about the Holocaust at Yad Vashem thought as they walked past photographs of Nazi crematoria carrying brown cardboard boxes containing their masks, the atropine injections, and the powder for mustard gas wounds.

Wars are hardly a novelty here, but in this one the civilian population feels it is the main target, and now and again nerves fray. Tel Aviv's Beilinson Hospital attended some thirty people who had injected themselves with atropine, mistaking the anxiety and heavy sweating they experienced for nerve-gas symptoms. A group of Hasidic Jews, thinking that they were contaminated with mustard gas, jumped under the freezing water in the makeshift showers in a hospital parking lot, wearing only their hats.

Seen from Jerusalem, the first two nights of the alert were not quite so scary. They were exhausting and tense, but the masks did give us a feeling of security. And reports on the relatively low damage inflicted were reassuring. The expectation here has been that given the inaccuracy of Iraqi missiles, Saddam would not dare launch them on Jerusalem. If the finger trembled on the button, the missile might hit the Dome of the Rock instead of the Western Wall. Supporters in the PLO and in the Arab world would not be amused. (Some say that Saddam launches his Scuds and then switches on CNN to see where they land.) Some Israelis have even moved temporarily into the city. Jerusalem's hotels, hurting for the last thirty-eight months because of the intifada, are suddenly full; in the Hilton's lobby half the clientele (journalists) is reporting on the other half (wealthy Tel Aviv families, complete with grannies and babies).

A group of Jews from Atlanta, who had come to show solidarity, left just before the January 15 deadline, and never sampled the rubber taste of the masks. The inscription on their sweatshirts, "I was in Jerusalem on January 11th," now must read a little like, "I chickened out with only four days to go." But others continue to flock in. Some of the new arrivals were particularly moving. A group of ten Scandinavian writers stayed for the deadline day, and the conductor Zubin Mehta rushed from Paris to be with his flock, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Others came to be with their loved ones, like my shelter-mate Mr. Bellos, from Chicago. He told me, his voice muffled by the mask, that his son was studying in a yeshiva here. And there were, of course, those who had planned their trips years and even decades before the invasion of Kuwait: the immigrants from the Soviet Union. Yaffim Zissovich, who arrived just as the war started, was glad to see his family of six equipped with gas masks. Indeed, he wished plaintively that they had had the masks the last time they needed them. His hometown is Chernobyl.

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

FINEST HOUR

By Fred Barnes

Jack Kemp, the secretary of housing and urban development, brought a copy of *Winston and Clementine*, a book about the Churchills, to the Cabinet meeting on January 17, intending to give it to President Bush. Asked to deliver a prayer, Kemp read from the book instead. He chose a passage quoting from Churchill's diary after he'd become prime minister of a besieged England in 1940. "As I went to bed at 3 a.m., I was conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene." Churchill felt as if he were "walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and this trial." Kemp, looking up at Bush, didn't leave his point in doubt. "Mr. President, this is the moment you were elected for," he said. "Destiny made you our president for this crisis."

The Churchill analogy is a stretch, except for one thing. Like Churchill, Bush has risen to the occasion. Facing the biggest crisis of his presidency, he is self-assured and occasionally bold. His country is not in peril like Churchill's. But England's plight meant that Churchill had only one option, fight. Bush

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could have chosen an easier route than war, containment. He could have claimed semi-victory as early as last August, having bottled up Iraqi forces in Kuwait and protected Saudi Arabia and its oil fields. Even if the coalition against Saddam Hussein began to crumble, he could have continued the embargo. To make it work, only Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the U.S. Navy are needed (they're enough to block Iraqi oil exports). Saddam might not have left Kuwait, but he'd have suffered. And Bush would in all likelihood have been reelected in 1992.

His current course is far riskier. If the war is swift and successful, he's golden. If it's stalemated and casualties are high, he's in deep trouble. The country—and the Bush presidency—would be thrown into turmoil. Does that scenario sound familiar? It should. It's what happened in 1969 when President Nixon decided against a quick pullout from Vietnam and in favor of prolonged "Vietnamization." Like Bush's, Nixon's was a risky decision. Antiwar protests were growing, and the country was ready to jettison Vietnam. But Nixon was certain that abrupt retreat was wrong, just as Bush is sure that anything short of driving Saddam out of Kuwait is unsatisfactory.

The Nixon analogy fits for other reasons. Bush and Nixon are foreign policy presidents. Both were wishy-washy on domestic issues, compromising with liberal Democrats, raising taxes, and infuriating conservative Republicans. With the Soviets, both pursued détente, again angering conservatives. But on the one issue they felt was of overriding importance—Vietnam, Iraq—they were firm. In his recent book, *In the Arena*, Nixon describes how he went to Camp David to write in longhand his "silent majority" speech appealing for support of his Vietnam policy. Bush wrote much of his war speech at Camp David. By the way, Bush talked to Nixon over the Christmas holidays, then again on January 16. He called all four former presidents that day to say he was going to attack Iraq. Nixon called back once, talking to Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national security adviser.

Bush has surprised his aides by his confident performance as war president. Contrary to popular belief, presidents are not heroes to their subordinates—quite the contrary. In public, aides are required by political etiquette to utter no criticism. Privately, White House officials zing Bush regularly. Many were appalled at his weakness in budget negotiations. But the Gulf crisis has produced a different Bush, detectable in his public comments. Upon returning to the White House from Camp David on January 21, he indignantly attacked Saddam for parading American POWs before TV cameras and expressed "concern" about the Soviet crackdown in the Baltics. "On the Gulf, he was clear, confident, in charge," one official said. "On the Baltics, it was gobbledygook."

Bush set the wartime mood for his administration: not somber, but businesslike. At the Cabinet meeting, held twenty-four hours after the first wave of warplanes hit Iraq, Secretary of State James Baker, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, and General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, patted each other on the back and joshed. Normally Bush would join in. "But he kept his distance from that," says a senior aide. After Kemp's citation of Churchill, he looked pensive, and ordered regular business to continue at the White House. "There's not a frenzy of wartime activity," says Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater. One exception was the special church service for top administration officials at Fort Myer, Virginia. Bush personally picked the hymns for it ("Amazing Grace" and "God of Our Fathers").

As war president Bush has three chief tasks: manage the war, protect the coalition, rally the public. In the first week of fighting at least, Bush did well on all three. He abided by his self-imposed ban on micromanaging the war. He tries to focus on the objectives of the war, not the tactics. He gets written updates from the White House situation room every two or three hours and watches CNN in his study next to the Oval Office. But he confines his contacts at the Pentagon to Cheney and Powell. He hasn't called General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of American forces in Saudi Arabia. Bush doesn't like briefings with military charts. He got one anyway at the Pentagon on January 18 that gave a detailed picture of bombing targets. The next day, when Cheney and Powell came to Camp David to brief Bush again, they brought no charts.

Bush's personal diplomacy "is the cement that holds the coalition together," says John Sununu, the White House chief of staff. Bush deftly encouraged Israel not to respond to Iraqi missile attacks and thus jeopardize the anti-Saddam coalition. He never flatly asked Israel not to retaliate. His promise of Patriot missiles with American crews was "a reward and an inducement," says a Bush aide. "You could imagine the dynamic going the other way. Instead, Bush created a cycle of increased trust between us and Israel." Bush also humored Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in a telephone call that was interrupted for twenty-five minutes when the line went down. He tried to woo King Hussein of Jordan with kind words at his January 18 press conference. The next day he realized this had failed when he watched a Hussein press conference on CNN. He quickly dispatched Richard Armitage to order—not urge or cajole, but order—Hussein to stay out of the war.

In his odd way, Bush has generated extraordinary public support for the war. Rather than inspirational, Bush's tack is to be firm, informative, and accessible. He brushed aside recommendations that he deliver a major war speech to Congress. Not my style, he said. Bush likes to speak to individuals, not the nation. So he followed his speech the night war began with two photo opportunities at which he answered a question or two, a press conference, then another photo op. In dribs and drabs, his message got out: we're determined to prevail, but don't expect victory too soon and too easily. Bush is really worried about euphoria. He told White House aides

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to stop their optimistic talk. When he left the Pentagon briefing, Bush commented to an aide, "These weapons are miraculous, but we can't lead people to believe that we've hit every target." Instead of arousing the public, Bush now wants to dampen their enthusiasm. Churchill never had that problem. ●

THE PRESS

CENSORED

By Peter Braestrup

Not quite a month after the Iraqis overran Kuwait and George Bush sent the first U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia, Murray Gartner, president of NBC News, fired off a complaint. On *The Wall Street Journal*'s op-ed page, he wrote: "Here's something you should know about that war . . . much of the news that you read or hear or see is being censored . . . there is no excuse for this." The press, he noted, had been shut out of Grenada and cooped up in Panama. In Saudi Arabia newsmen were limited to guided tours of selected American units and, on occasion, there was unwarranted official interference with TV crews filming or interviewing U.S. forces.

That was the first major gripe in the current revival of the chronic tensions between the U.S. military and the American media. Four months later, after arduous negotiations with the media bosses and military services, Pete Williams, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, issued a final set of "ground rules" for the impending combat coverage in Saudi Arabia. He discarded some curbs sought by the suspicious service chiefs, notably on TV "ambush interviews" and off-the-record discussions. Taking account of the 500-plus journalists and TV technicians in Riyadh and Dhahran (a record media crowd for a U.S. war), the Pentagon required journalists to travel to the battlefields under escort in six- to ten-person groups ("pools") and to make their dispatches available to other newspeople—after World War II-style military "security review." The uproar was predictable. No such curbs had been in force during the Vietnam War, although then as now reporters were warned not to reveal locations and the numbers and future moves of allied forces.

Before any civilized discussion of the media's role in a war can take place, both the military and the media need to get over the Vietnam myth. The military needs to realize that the media, whatever their flaws, do not lose or win wars. And the media has to acknowledge that military censorship won't keep TV from bringing home to the American people unpleasant truths about war.

There is a widespread misperception that CBS, NBC, and ABC brought Vietnam's horrors nightly into the American living room—and thereby undercut public support for the war. In fact, although about half of all the TV reports filed from Vietnam in 1965-70 were about military action, only about 3 percent showed "heavy battle." There's also a mistaken notion that television news was the deciding factor in shaping public opinion toward the Vietnam War. Opinion polls for Vietnam (no censorship, television news) and the Korean War (censorship, no TV) show that public support for both wars declined at roughly the same rate.

It is equally important for the media to understand that Operation Desert Storm is not Vietnam, a low-intensity small-unit war, where military security and journalistic access to the battlefield posed few problems. It's more like the D-Day landings on the Normandy beaches in June 1944: attacking an entrenched, well-equipped foe by air before using secrecy, deception, and surprise to breach his defenses on the ground.

Dealing with distinctions like these are all the more difficult because, with the end of the draft in 1972, an increasing proportion of editors, television producers, anchor persons, and reporters have had no direct exposure to the military, to say nothing of combat. A *Wall Street Journal* editor, Tom Ricks, noted that in his newspaper's Washington bureau only two of twenty-two men and women had ever been in uniform. And those Washington reporters assigned to the Pentagon in the 1980s covered it more or less the way all federal agencies are covered—in terms of personalities, budgets, procurement scandals, bureaucratic dogfights. Tactics, strategy, logistics, and military history are as foreign to most Washington reporters—and to their immediate bosses—as the basics of American football are to, say, Kuwaitis.

This became clear even before hostilities began on January 16. Dispatched to cover the buildup, many journalists found themselves dealing with an alien culture: they could not quite get straight either the unit designations or the language. Describing an artillery battery in training, a *Washington Post* correspondent reported someone yelling, "Fire missile." Howitzers do not fire missiles; the command is "fire mission." Others, especially on TV, sought refuge in descriptions of high-tech weaponry or in what an ABC producer called "boo-hoo" journalism. In a memorable interview with Colonel McCoomb, commander of an Air Force tactical fighter wing, one PBS reporter asked on the eve of hostilities if his "body chemistry" didn't tell him he was frightened. Wasn't he worried about combat? Wasn't he worried about his men? How did he *feel*? The colonel crisply assured the reporter that he and his men could cope.

After the air war began, reporters unhappily realized they were at the mercy of the military briefers, who in turn are at the mercy of a nervous bureaucracy. They cannot go along on the air raids and see for themselves. Incoming Scud missiles provide

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excitement, but little information.

Yet the ground rules, given the size of the press corps and the threat to U.S. troops, are not, on the face of it, unreasonable. Despite censorship, the basic facts have appeared in print, along with a lot of speculation. So far the fog of war and military delays in making its own assessments have been more to blame for the lack of information than official obfuscation. The real test for both the media and the military has yet to come—the ground attack against Saddam's entrenched infantry artillery and tanks. Reporters will then be personally facing the stress of battle, and General Norman Schwarzkopf's staff will be trying to sort out organized chaos on an hourly basis.

In the end newspapers and newsmagazines, possibly to their own surprise, are likely to play an important role during this war: correcting and compensating for the excesses and limitations of "instant" television. Already, for example, *The New York Times*, with a half-dozen reporters in Saudi Arabia, has begun to show the same breadth and authority that it gave its readers last year in reporting the drama in Eastern Europe. Newsstand sales of all newspapers have soared.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon and General Schwarzkopf will do well to strive for maximum feasible candor, to avoid excessive optimism, and to have some faith in the ability of the press and public to cope with the reverses, disappointments, and disasters that always occur in war. And as Gerald Seib of *The Wall Street Journal* noted recently on CNN, journalists would do well to remind the audience of what they don't know. So far, it's a lot more than they do know.

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The day the weapons worked.

ROBOWAR

By Gregg Easterbrook

When correspondents and diplomats eventually tour the areas of Iraq attacked by the U.N. coalition air forces, they may be in for a surprise. Though the raids are intense, unremitting, and conducted with the world's most advanced non-nuclear weaponry, it is unlikely they have caused the sort of general destruction being anticipated by commentators—vast expanses of carnage, smoking craters, and blackened obliteration.

A reasonable estimate is that through the first five days of Desert Storm, the coalition air forces delivered around fifteen kilotons of high explosives, about the same as the blast power of the Hiroshima bomb. Yet Iraq so far claims just forty-one civilian deaths (though the figure is sure to rise).

Despite public perceptions, the recent history of high-tech conventional warfare has been toward steadily reduced general destruction. Non-atomic allied bombardments killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in Germany and Japan during World War II, and flattened substantial portions of large cities such as Tokyo and Dresden. When three times the tonnage was dropped during Vietnam, it was widely assumed that civilian casualties would be three times more horrific. Instead, the highest respectable estimate is that 65,000 North Vietnamese civilians died during U.S. air raids: far too many, but not the apocalypse. When after the war William Broyles, a soldier during Vietnam and later a journalist, became the first American reporter to visit Hanoi, he was amazed at how difficult it was to find evidence of the bombardment in civilian areas. Similarly, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, initial press reports described the ruination as shocking, with some projections of whole cities being wiped off the face of the earth. Actual devastation from the invasion turned out to be nowhere near what was widely reported at the time.

What's going on here? First, modern munitions are getting better at hitting what they're pointed at. Second, many high-tech weapons have less destructive effect than comparable devices of World War II.

Accuracy. During World War II typical allied bombing accuracy was about one mile—meaning bombers sent against an urban military target such as a rail yard would be almost certain to hit school yards and homes. Limited accuracy further ensured that in most raids hits would disperse across a wide area; nobody in the city would be safe. By Vietnam overall bombing accuracy had improved to roughly one-quarter mile. This was

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not enough to destroy the North Vietnamese army: a bomb missing a supply depot or truck convoy by a quarter mile will do no militarily significant harm. But the improvement meant both that accidental hits on civilian areas became less common and that the circle of destruction from an air raid could shrink considerably.

Smart bombs used in the Desert Storm raids now have accuracies that in practical use may average as tight as 100 feet or less. This shrinks the typical circle of destruction to a small, discrete point. For example, as Michael Kelly reports in this issue, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense was obliterated by three cruise missiles, and yet the hospital and houses next to it were unscathed. During World War II a raid to knock out that same building might have entailed thirty heavy bombers scattering their payloads for miles on all sides. A Vietnam-era raid might have entailed a dozen fighter-bombers leveling the entire block.

Better accuracy is made possible both by improved sensors and guidance mechanisms in the munitions and by recent dramatic improvements in control of the aircraft themselves. Most of the Desert Storm weapons were launched from maneuverable, fighter-type aircraft such as the F-15E or F/A-18. Unlike lumbering, high-altitude bombers such as the B-52, these aircraft can draw close enough to the target that the pilot sees what he is shooting at (either visually or via electronics) before releasing a weapon. He then activates at least one guidance mechanism that gives the smart bomb extremely specific, although of course not foolproof, instructions on just what it is supposed to hit. There are no big breakthroughs in the types of gizmos used for this purpose; the smart bombs being employed against Iraq differ little in principle from ones U.S. forces have been racking up since late Vietnam. But small, tinkering improvements and ever better electronics make them increasingly proficient.

Meanwhile, a widely overlooked advance has occurred in aircraft electronics. Until recently even the most sophisticated attack aircraft navigated their runs partly by landmarks: follow the river three minutes, turn 40 degrees at the bridge, and so on. Now, for well-scouted targets, precise digital navigation waypoints may be programmed into aircraft flight-control computers in advance, and cross-checked by onboard inertial guidance sets. During flight the pilot may receive extremely accurate triangulation cues from the Global Positioning Satellite network just going into operation. And in theory, his progress may be tracked by an AWACS battle-management plane, with AWACS alerting him to any course errors. (For both tactical and technical-glitch reasons, U.S. pilots have never been under full AWACS direction in a real operation. It's not yet known if this has been achieved during Desert Storm.) Using their improved navigation data, the coalition pilots may have been able to know where they were in three-dimensional space to within a few meters throughout their missions. Precision course control greatly improves the chance that a pilot will attack the right target and start his delivery run in the right place. It means that when the pilot looks into his weapons scanners he will see exactly what he expects to see; and the smart bomb, once released, will be exactly where its computer thinks.

Has a threshold been crossed at which the promise of pinpoint weaponry finally becomes real? The advance from one-mile accuracy to a quarter mile to the roughly 500 feet achieved in the 1986 Tripoli raid required billions of dollars in technology, but militarily did not accomplish that much; 500 feet is still a complete miss against most targets, the reason Qaddafi still lives. In contrast, the narrowing of bombing accuracy from 500 feet to around 100 feet doesn't sound like much. But this comparatively small addition to smart-bomb performance may transform a technology that has so far been mainly sales hype to a very complex undertaking that finally comes together. The difference between 500-foot and 100-foot accuracy means, say, the ability to hit not just the general area of a missile site but the radars, launchers, and control trailers specifically.

A related factor is better reliability. Wonder weapons contain so many pieces so difficult to test under simulated conditions that when actually used in combat, the failure of one small part has often rendered the entire system an embarrassing fizzle. In the last decade the reliability of all manner of high-tech devices, from consumer electronics to supersonic aircraft, has improved markedly, mainly through the replacement of moving parts with microelectronics.

Less bang. Though new explosive compounds are more "energetic" than those of World War II, in many cases the warhead of a smart weapon is not huge. Huge warheads are not necessary if the weapon finds the target precisely. And the body of the device may be given over to engines, fuel, and electronics. There's not much room left for the nasty part.

For example, most of the Tomahawk cruise missiles being used to support the coalition air assaults are fitted with 1,000 pounds of conventional explosives. If a Tomahawk scores a direct hit on a vital installation such as a command center or a radar battery, that's plenty. But if the Tomahawk misses its target, destruction will not be widespread. Every Tomahawk in the U.S. arsenal could be fired into Chicago, and the city would not be leveled.

The gradual shrinking of the destructive part of smart bombs was not done for humanitarian purposes. Planners simply calculated that pound for pound, computers, sensors, and fuel were often worth more to overall effectiveness than blast power. But whatever the reason, many high-tech weapons now reflect the virtue of being more threatening to an enemy military yet less threatening to civilians.

The Maverick air-to-ground missile being used extensively in Desert Storm has warheads that, if delivered accurately, will demolish a tank or hardened bunker. But the Maverick's "destruct radius" for this purpose is only about ten feet. If one of these devices struck the middle of a suburban boulevard, buildings on either side would not be destroyed.

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The fabled Stinger anti-aircraft missile bears just 2.5 pounds of explosives, not much more than a hand grenade. Many current anti-aircraft missiles work not by blowing targets to smithereens, but by damaging them so they eventually crash. If a Stinger or Sidewinder or similar missile roars past its target and hits something on the ground, unintended destruction is not major.

Some advanced weapons do not cause blasts at all. For example, the cannon of the Army's much-discussed new $2.5 million M-1 tank fires a non-explosive round. Because modern composite armor can deflect medium-strength explosions, fancy tanks now try to destroy each other with "kinetic kill" shells made of extremely dense materials such as a non-fissionable form of uranium. These projectiles are designed to smash through armor layers and disable tanks mechanically, knocking out the engine or turret, rather than blowing the target to kingdom come.

The infantry's TOW and Dragon anti-tank missiles and the fast Gatling cannon of the A-10 ground-support aircraft all work the same way, firing non-explosive slugs that are essentially incredibly powerful bullets. Troops call such weapons "tank breakers," not tank destroyers. If a cannon shot from an M-1 or A-10 misses its target and slams into a hill, there will be a deafening noise, but little "collateral" destruction. An M-1 tank could fire its entire magazine into an office building and, though lots of rooms inside would be smashed up, the building itself would probably be left standing.

Thus, though the firepower of contemporary militaries appears to be going off the scale, in some respects smart weapons are less cruel than what they supplant. Factor in their much higher cost, which means that fewer weapons are built—at the current bombing pace, the United States may begin running out of some precision munitions next month—and it's tempting to suppose there are closet pacifists in the Pentagon basement, patiently manipulating events in their direction.

But let's have no illusions about what this equipment might accomplish in a war against a nation that could strike back, or about what will happen if this war shifts

Night Flight

The modern Pentagon has invested billions in high-technology wonder weapons that have an annoying habit of becoming duds in actual use. Yet in the angry early hours of the U.N. coalition attack on Iraq, the hardware finally appeared to be working as advertised. Beyond the skill and courage of coalition forces, what made this happen?

Ideal circumstances. The attack began on a moonless, clear night. These are the best circumstances for Western forces to employ their recently improved infrared vision and guidance devices, which can be confused by clouds or humidity; the worst conditions for Iraqi gunners, who lack similar night-sight equipment and must rely on moonlight or radar that was being jammed.

Improved ability to attack in the dark allowed the first waves to arrive at about three a.m., when Iraqi defenders were nodding off after a long day of tension. Although the 1986 U.S. raid against Libya also commenced in the dead of night, Iraqi commanders may have expected hostilities to begin at the traditional hour, dawn. From now on, it may become standard for wars to start at night.

Ideal circumstances also existed for the hail of cruise missiles that preceded the aircraft assault. Such weapons can be extremely accurate, but only against stationary targets and only when elaborate digital maps for the missiles are available in advance. Most combat is rapidly evolving, and the conditions favoring cruise missiles rarely align. But the five-month standoff between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the U.N. deadline gave the Navy ample time to compile digital terrain scans and load cruise missiles with the millions of bits of computer code necessary. Additionally, few Iraqi interceptors took to the air. Though cruise missiles are hard to locate because they possess the ultimate stealth quality—smallness—when found they are a cinch to shoot down, droning along mindlessly at the speed of a commercial airliner.

Proximity and command. The attacking aircraft operated from bases proximate to the targets, eliminating the tiring transit times and multiple midair refuelings of the Libya raid or British attempts to precision-bomb the Falklands. Aside from the intercepted Scuds launched toward Saudi Arabia, missiles more noted as anti-civilian terror weapons than items of military significance, the bases from which the coalition forces operate have so far not themselves been attacked, which has simplified operations enormously.

And because of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Pentagon reorganization bill, faithfully executed by former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman William Crowe, there was a single unified commander running all aspects of the operation from the scene: not a committee of pie-dividers with half of the Washington brass peering over their shoulders, as occurred during the 1980 Iran rescue.

Limited opposing fire. No doubt Iraqi air defenses are intensely terrifying to the pilots who have experienced them: anybody who buys the line that modern high-tech warfare is "impersonal" has never had a SAM missile homing in on him. But for some reason—whether the superiority of coalition electronic jammers, Iraqi long-term stalling strategy, or simply that Saddam's air defenses don't work from disrepair—the other side is simply not firing back as much as expected.

This allows pilots at their targets to follow graceful curvilinear arcs, holding electronic designators on the aim point throughout a smart weapon's flight. If the launching aircraft were jerking in violent evasive maneuvers, the steady target cross hairs shown in the Air Force combat videos would instead be jerking madly, the smart weapons losing much of their IQ. Unpredictable air defense activity may also force attack planes to depart from the elegant, preprogrammed digital course headings that apparently were the norm in Desert Storm.

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beyond the deep-strike stage. Already B-52s are raining old-fashioned wide-area destruction on Iraqi troops: military targets, yes, but also human beings who are surely suffering grisly deaths off-camera. And though a ground war, if it begins, will employ some expensive new weapons that do not kill arbitrarily, there will be plenty of the other kind in use too. ●

The CIA and the war debate.

WHOSE AGENTS?

By Sidney Blumenthal

The debate that preceded the first blast of war already seems dusty. But for some senators it is still alive in one respect. For them, the real issue involves neither accusations of weakness nor conceits of strength; it is not so much a divisive point between the parties as between the branches of government—what they see as the political abuse of the CIA by the president.

Long ago, when President Bush was pleading for public and congressional "patience" in supporting sanctions against Iraq, he himself apparently believed that sanctions would take only two or three months to work. At least, that is what he informed several senators. What's more, the CIA had led them to believe that sanctions were profoundly undermining Iraq, but that the time needed for maximum effect was longer than three months. They were "more effective than Saddam expected," a Senate committee was told by a top CIA official in secret testimony. By summer the Iraqi dictator would have completely depleted his foreign exchange. In spite of some leakage through the borders, the CIA informed the senators, imports were reduced by 90 percent and exports by 97 percent. Already the Iraqi GNP had fallen "in the 40 to 50 percent range." Most important, not a single high-tech military component had been successfully smuggled in. If sanctions alone did not compel Saddam to seek a diplomatic withdrawal, they might well have seriously impaired his ability to wage war. His economy, in any case, was being strangled.

A good deal of this top-secret information was openly reiterated by the director of Central Intelligence, William Webster, who told the House Armed Services Committee on December 5 that the sanctions were "a serious blow" that would cause real damage to Iraq's air force in three to six months and its ground forces in nine months. In all of these rounds of testifying, CIA officials presented themselves as objective analysts, carefully declining to draw policy conclusions. Such judgments were properly left to elected officials.

Thus the public debate revolved around the means to the end, rather than the end itself. Many of the senators backed sanctions as a possible alternative to the prospect of a bloody land war. Grisly scenarios had been painted for them by former generals and secretaries of defense; military commanders privately voiced their fears that the president would force a speedy war at the price of high casualties. Even if sanctions failed to move Saddam, they might make his military machine less lethal, as the CIA had suggested.

Then, on January 10, Webster wrote a letter to the House Armed Services Committee, aligning the mystique of the agency's omniscience with one side in the debate beginning that morning in Congress. Not only did he make conclusive claims, but he also selectively contradicted the testimony he and other CIA officials had previously given. At every possible point in favor of the sanctions approach, Webster offered a rebuttal. Now he insisted that "the ability of Iraqi ground forces to defend Kuwait is unlikely to be substantially eroded over the next six to 12 months even if effective sanctions can be maintained." Whatever their economic consequences, they were "alone . . . unlikely to compel Saddam to retreat from Kuwait." Sanctions, in short, were impotent. To carry this message, Webster had descended from the rarefied realm of fact into the arena as a crucial player on the president's team.

Immediately after the release of Webster's letter, Senator David Boren, a conservative Democrat from Oklahoma and chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, issued a statement: "I believe Judge Webster's letter reflects the fact that the intelligence community at times of crisis is always put in difficult political situations in its publicly stated conclusions." Using what passes for sarcasm in the oblique language of congressional politesse, Boren added that "very different conclusions could be drawn" from the classified data presented by the CIA.

"This is not a debate about whether force should ever be used. No one proposes to rule out the use of force," said Senator George Mitchell, the majority leader, in his floor speech that same day. He cited at length what the CIA had told congressional leaders about the effects of sanctions. In this way he signaled to his colleagues his displeasure with Webster's reversal and his political role. Many of them shared his cool anger, including Senator Sam Nunn, who had sponsored the resolution in favor of continuing sanctions. (Nunn has told me that the question of Webster's actions should be taken up at the war's end.)

Though Webster's letter was exquisitely timed, it probably had a negligible effect on the debate. Many of the swing Democrats who backed Bush's position were as offended by Webster as those who did not. "Outrageous," says a House Democrat who was one of the main supporters of the Bush resolution. The agency of deception, after all, had revealed itself as a clumsy lobbyist.

In Bush's letter to congressional leaders at the start

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of the war, he repeated word-for-word Webster's formula about the unworkability of sanctions. For all intents and purposes, the impassioned debate of a few days earlier had become purely academic, with one exception: the role of the CIA. "It was politically suborned," says Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who suggests that the agency has outlived its usefulness and ought to be abolished, its functions parceled out to the State Department and the Pentagon. If Moynihan's idea were to become reality, then the relation of foreign policy to intelligence, of aims to methods, would be far clearer—and so would the lines of accountability.

The CIA is a creature of the cold war, created by the National Security Act of 1947, the year of the Truman Doctrine. Its mission was wholly defined by the long twilight struggle, which it was assumed would last until the end of days. The entire nervous system of the agency—a tangle of global operations that in time grew into a bureaucracy magnitudes larger than the State Department's—was sparked by the cold war impulse. No matter where or when, why or how, the ultimate rationale remained constant. Yet for all the millions of secrets collected, the CIA missed the one big fact it was invented to discover: that the Soviet Union was collapsing.

Since the cold war started melting away the CIA has lurched from one calling to another—the war on drugs, anti-terrorism, and, finally, sanctions against Iraq. When the president's policy was sanctions, the CIA provided the grist of supporting data. But when that policy shifted overnight, so did the CIA. Its post-cold-war mission began to look remarkably like its worst moments during the cold war: using intelligence to serve the shifting, short-term political objectives of the president—a president who had been appointed CIA director in the Nixon aftermath to restore the agency's soiled reputation. ●

Iraq under air seige.

BLITZED

By Michael Kelly

AMMAN, JORDAN

The days of delusion are dead in Baghdad. The city has finally discovered the obvious: a contest between a Third World semi-power fighting World War II and a First World superpower fighting World War III is no contest at all. The war could well go on for several bloody months or even longer, and kill many soldiers, but its inevitable conclusion is strongly suggested in one fact easily grasped by the people on the receiving end of the American-led attack. This is a war in which, in the very first hour of conflict, the attacking forces were able to destroy specific targets at will, with no losses, in the heart of the defending forces' capital city. And yet there was Saddam, still spouting the big lie. "The infidel tyrant's missiles and aircraft are being destroyed," he said in his first post-D-day radio address, on January 20. "His defeat will be certain."

But big lies weren't playing too well in Baghdad after January 16. With allied bombs and missiles redrawing the skyline every hour, the entire city was a reality check. The first morning of the war I was standing across the Tigris River from the Ministry of Defense, looking at the black smoke pouring out of it from a cruise missile hit five minutes earlier, when the second missile smacked home, shuddering the ground with the explosion and sending up great new billows of smoke. Five minutes after that, the third missile boomed. In ten minutes the heart and symbol of Iraq's armed forces was a burning rubble. The hospital next to it, though, was untouched, and so were the homes crowded around it. The attack had been so swift that the anti-aircraft guns had not even fired.

By the morning of January 20, four days after a U.S. Air Force Stealth bomber opened the war with a 2,000-pound laser-guided bomb targeted precisely on the microwave dishes atop Baghdad's international telecommunications building, the city was crippled. There was no mainline electricity, no running water, no working telephones. The streets were mostly deserted, the shops mostly closed. The few grocery stores open for business were charging extortionate prices for such basics as candles and beer, and were mobbed with panic buyers. The mood of the people could be gauged by the growing number of accidents, the cars of frightened drivers piling up against lampposts and guard rails with every round of anti-aircraft fire.

The allied bombs and missiles had destroyed or crippled the Defense Ministry, the telecommunications building, the power station, seven telecommunication microwave relay towers, the headquarters of Saddam Hussein's Baath Arab Socialist Party, the huge (and, for Iraq's economy, vital) Dora oil refinery, a key nuclear research facility, the air force headquarters, and the airport. That's just in greater Baghdad. In the first two days of war the allied forces dropped 5 million pounds of bombs on Iraq and Kuwait, fired 196 Tomahawk cruise missiles, ran 2,000 B-52 and Stealth bomber attack missions, and so on and on, to devastating effect.

You couldn't turn around without seeing something get taken out. My drive out of Iraq took about twenty hours longer than it should have, in part because we had to keep pulling over to wait out bombardments. In that one 500-mile drive, we saw allied planes pound the big Al Walid air base in the western Iraqi desert, a major phosphorous plant, and an oil pipeline pumping station. The anti-aircraft fire was, as always, spirited and heavy and just about wholly ineffective.

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The one-sidedness could be seen in the air. In the nighttime raids, the anti-aircraft fire would begin a few minutes before the bombers came, in scenes of incandescent hysteria and beauty, the tracer shells tracking lovely curves, and Ss and parabolas of orange-red light against the backdrop of a blacked-out city skyline. Only every fifth or sixth shell was a tracer, which created a spacing that gave the ack-ack trails a pleasingly deliberate, almost lazy look. You could see the tracers hit their apogee and then explode in delicate bright-white starbursts, like the better sort of fireworks. You could hear the defense too, in a big sweeping wash of noise, the sharp staccato bursts of the lighter guns punctuated by the thuds of the big ones.

What you could not see, or hear, were the planes at which all this was directed. Those B-52s and Stealths were far, far above the fire and clamor. You might catch just a hint of engine sound, but generally you knew that they had come only when the bombs fell and the big yellow-red bursts ballooned up over the stricken target. Then they were gone, leaving the Iraqi guns firing crazily and hopelessly in the air for another forty-five minutes or more. By Saturday the defensive fire was more controlled, in shorter bursts and focused on a more concentrated area. Whether this reflected more discipline or less ammunition was not clear, but the lack of results was the same anyway.

There was one element of attack that was visible, but it was more or less unstoppable, and a glimpse of it was frightening. The sight of Tomahawk cruise missiles moving purposefully two or three stories above the city streets became a recurring nightmare vision in Baghdad. Cruise missiles move at subsonic speeds and can easily be followed with the eye as their lethally single-minded little gyroscopes and computer circuits guide them along to their target. A stunned Reuters correspondent actually saw a missile arrive at a street corner, appear to pause for a moment, and then turn left.

On Saturday a group of reporters standing outside the Al Rasheed Hotel looked up to see a Tomahawk sailing along toward the Foreign Ministry, or perhaps the National Assembly. Suddenly, and directly over their heads, it exploded, sending them diving under parked cars as flaming chunks of engine and cowling rained down. The missile, accidentally detonated or hit by an Iraqi anti-aircraft shot, split into two flaming balls; one roared into the disused servants' quarters of the hotel, the other demolished its conference center.

It is pathetically indicative of the shape of things that from this minor stroke of relative luck the Iraqis claimed a great victory. Shortly after the explosion Iraqi soldiers brought into the hotel bomb shelter pieces of the blown-apart missile. Hoisting the debris high, they declared it to be the earthly remains of a fighter-bomber, shot down by the great Iraqi gunners. The women in the shelter stopped their weeping and let loose with a high-pitched keening of false triumph.

Such moments of Great Satan-defiance were, however, rare. As early as the morning of January 17, after the first night of bombing, the doubts and fears of a truth come home were right out in the open. The most astonishing examples were provided by the people whose job it is to keep up the lies, the serious men of the Ministry of Information and Culture. One reporter approached Saddoun al-Genabi, the affable chief of the "minders" who tell foreign journalists what they may and may not do. "I will see you when I return," said the reporter. "If I am here," said Saddoun. "If I am dead, visit my grave."

ABC cameraman Fabrice Moussus had a conversation with a ministry minder that was, in the terms of Iraqi politics, apocalyptic. The worried minder of official information asked Moussus first for . . . information. How long would the bombing continue? How could he best protect his family? Then he leaned forward and whispered something that you would never have heard in Baghdad before the bombs. "I will be very happy when this is over," he said. "We do not like this government. I am afraid many Iraqis will get killed, but we hope the [allied forces] will hit the government areas and help us get rid of this government."

It's the beginning of the end for any tyrant when jokes are made at his expense. The morning after Iraq's first missile attack on Israel, one Iraqi said, with a sly smile, "Seven rockets and seven casualties? We could do better with pistols."

This kind of heretical—and, in a state where criticism of Saddam is a capital offense, extremely dangerous—talk was cropping up all over, blooming in the first tentative breakdown of state control. The signs of the breakdown were small but real: a man in a crowd passing an American journalist a note reading, "You are not the enemy. Saddam is the enemy"; a bomb shelter full of people sitting through a night of attack, playing cards, sleeping, and talking among themselves in complete disdain for the address from Saddam playing on the radio.

Saddam's men did their best to make Baghdad put on a happy face. Veteran reporters there could not recall a time of greater freedom and bonhomie. But all species revert to form, and by the end of the first week of war, gangsterism was back. A group of state security agents grabbed three European photographers and took them off for eight hours during which they were blindfolded, handcuffed, and threatened with death. Saddam paraded the seven prisoners of war on the radio and television broadcast, and announced they would be placed as human shields at key industrial locations. The last of the Western press was chucked out, and the people of Baghdad settled down for their punishment, which is, after all, what they know best.

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The case against a land war.

THE UNSHELTERING SKY

By Eliot A. Cohen

The opening stage of the Persian Gulf war has gone spectacularly well. It appears that the United States and its allies have grounded most of the Iraqi air force and wiped out those portions daring enough to rise and fight. Headquarters buildings in Baghdad and elsewhere have been smashed without damage to civilian dwellings. Iraqi forces in the field have been pummeled retail—by sharpshooting, precision-guided laser bombs—and wholesale, by B-52 carpet bombing. And most astonishing of all, this result has been achieved at minimal cost. If the allies' press statements are to be believed, they have suffered losses of less than one airplane per 500 combat missions, for a loss rate of two-tenths of 1 percent. This compares with prewar projections by veteran air generals of a rate of one half of 1 percent, or World War II rates of 1 percent to 3 percent or higher.

This success has many explanations, including the technological superiority of Western military hardware, the probable cooperation of Iraq's erstwhile arms suppliers in providing information about its defenses, and the inexperience and relatively low priority of the Iraqi air defense system, which did not do much during the Iran-Iraq war either. Above all other explanations, however, stands the skill of our pilots and the competence of the complex organizations that support them. The question must soon be answered, however, how the military will prosecute the war from here.

On Sunday, January 20, the theater commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, hinted at the possibility of a war won from the air alone. But with this exception, press reports and the statements of senior officers indicated that a ground offensive is in the works. One has the sense of a script playing itself out, the actors capable of tinkering with the timing and the delivery but unwilling or unable to alter the words that will be delivered. But there is nothing inescapable about a ground-war strategy. Indeed, there are at least two broad alternatives before the allies—a pitched battle to evict the Iraqis from Kuwait fought within the next few weeks, or a prolonged siege of Iraq by air.

Why, then, does the land option now seem the likeliest course? All along, the weight of official opinion, as articulated by senior defense officials, has suggested the inevitability of an attack on the ground. Those who take this view offer several arguments, which are best dealt with one by one.

Our objective is the liberation of Kuwait; to achieve that objective we have to occupy that country, that is, invade it. The temptation to simplify war has here outrun our good sense. Our objectives are not, in fact, confined to the liberation of Kuwait. They include the destruction of the Iraqi unconventional weapons program, the smashing of the Iraqi military, and the demonstration that aggression of this kind will have extremely painful consequences. The liberation of the territory of Kuwait is an important mission of our armed forces, but far from the only one. It is comforting to think that we can reduce political objectives in any war to a one- or two-sentence formula, and to a tangible task such as the physical possession of a morsel of territory. After the Vietnam War many Americans concluded that we failed not because our strategy was poor or our goals unachievable, but because we formulated them with insufficient precision. The truth is that in all wars political objectives are ambiguous, shifting, conditional, and imprecise—that is, after all, part of what makes them political.

The United States must keep all of its objectives in mind as it considers its strategy. The liberation of Kuwait is, to be sure, one of those, but there are other paths to that end than invasion—the voluntary and orderly withdrawal of Iraqi forces following a negotiated armistice, for example, or the dissolution of the occupying force through mass desertions. There is, however, no particular urgency in planting the flag of a re-established Kuwait in the ruins of that city-state. Most Kuwaitis have fled their country, and although it would be a pity to prolong the sufferings of those who remain under a barbaric occupation, America's first responsibility is to its own citizens, including those soldiers and Marines who would perish in an early assault.

All wars must be decided on the ground; air power has

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never won a war. Assertions of this kind carry astonishing weight, particularly when delivered by serving or retired officers as elementary and unshakable military orthodoxy. Yet surely these are, in part, historical judgments, and on matters of military history civilians may reasonably differ with soldiers. And insofar as such dicta are intended to shape current policy, they must go beyond an appeal to authority and demonstrate their logic.

Now, it is quite true that air power alone has never won a war, although one can plausibly argue that it came remarkably close to just that in the Pacific war. By the spring of 1945 American army and naval aviators had demolished Japan's civilian and military industries, sunk most of the Japanese fleet, and established a virtual blockade of the Japanese islands (with the aid of American submarines). Ground and purely naval forces had served mainly to seize and hold forward bases for the projection of air power. In 1945, before it had become clear that the atom bomb would work, Chief of Staff George Marshall and Chief of Naval Operations Ernest King had argued about the need for an invasion of the Japanese homeland—Marshall favoring it, King thinking that a tight blockade and intense bombardment could do the trick. The dispute is memorable for two reasons: first, Marshall was probably wrong—even without the atom bomb the Japanese would have collapsed sooner or later without the horrendous casualties inherent in a strategy of invasion. The most revered American military figure of the twentieth century showed himself strategically fallible as he had on other occasions, and this in itself is no small lesson.

Moreover, the Marshall-King dispute shows that there is really no such thing as a single "expert" military judgment, for here was a case where two formidable experts in the art of war disagreed. In the present case, we may have lost the chance of hearing a military "second opinion" because the chief of staff of the Air Force, General Michael Dugan, lost his job in part for suggesting that a ground offensive might be unnecessary. Other air commanders have noted the penalty exacted for sinning against the orthodoxy of interservice "jointness" now enshrined in law in the Goldwater-Nichols Act as well as official doctrine.

It is not clear that a ground invasion of Kuwait or even a shallow envelopment through southern Iraq would be decisive. Assume, for the moment, that Kuwait would fall quickly; would the war necessarily come to an end? If Saddam continued to fight, would the United States have to drive on to Baghdad and occupy that city? Were we to dispatch a large force to occupy a major Arab capital, would our coalition tolerate it, and would the costs be bearable? Would a war that gave Iraqis the opportunity, or even the imperative, of fighting to defend their homes be a short one? And do we wish the responsibility of garrisoning a hostile nation, suppressing guerrilla enemies, and reconstructing the Iraqi government?

Winston Churchill once wrote: "The success of a commander does not arise from following rules or models. It consists in an absolutely new comprehension of the dominant facts of the situation . . . and all the forces at work. Cooks use recipes for dishes and doctors have prescriptions for diseases, but every great operation of war is unique." There may be *specific* reasons for preferring a ground attack to a prolonged air siege, but those have nothing to do with military proverbs, even those uttered by men with stars on their shoulders.

Only a ground attack promises a quick win, and we must achieve that to keep losses low, the coalition together, and domestic support intact. Would a ground assault deliver quick victory? Perhaps, although the degree of uncertainty here is greater than is often acknowledged. Better than half of our armored force, the Seventh Corps from Europe, has not yet formed up in Saudi Arabia. Its units have trained for encounter and defensive battles in Western Europe, not for breaching and breakthrough battles in the Persian Gulf. None of our units has ever operated in the presence of large quantities of chemical weapons, and our equipment is not particularly well suited to the climate and environment of the desert. It is conceivable, if unlikely, that a ground battle could turn into a bloody fiasco.

More likely, however, it would succeed, in that we would liberate Kuwait, although that might not end the war. But would a quick win be a cheap one? Consider a model blitz, the German attack on Poland in 1939. The Poles were technologically outclassed and fought in the open, not behind fortifications like the Iraqis; they were surrounded in the north, west, and south by the Germans, and attacked in the east by the Soviets; the campaign lasted less than four weeks and was, by all accounts, a master of military art. Yet the Germans took 45,000 casualties. For the United States a quick win purchased at the price of high casualties is no win, a point well understood by Saddam Hussein, who wants to lure us into a battle of this kind. His stature in Iraq and the Arab world depends on his ability to bloody us, and then force a compromise peace or even accept our terms, but after having shown that he alone could stand up to us. We must hold casualties down chiefly because we wish to spare the lives of our fellow citizens; but we must also do so in order to achieve our political objectives and to deny the enemy his strategic goals.

The president is more likely to lose domestic support through the taking of heavy casualties than through the prolongation of a relatively cheap, in terms of American lives, air campaign. As for the coalition, none of its members, except Britain, has yet thrown its weight into the war, nor are they likely to do so. We can withstand their impatience, offering to endorse, if necessary, the employment of their armies in a breakthrough battle in Kuwait should they desire it. The Arab and Islamic world has been noticeably quiet

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throughout the first week of the war, and there is no particular reason to think that our political situation with respect to allies, neutrals, and potential enemies will become any more tenuous if we refrain from a ground attack than if we pursue one.

Our strategy henceforth should be one of siege, not storm. Iraq today is, in fact, in a strategic position reminiscent of that of Japan in 1945. Its enemies can strike at any part of the country with near impunity, and with every passing day its capacity to retaliate, or even defend itself, weakens. Our ground forces, like the garrisons of the Pacific islands almost half a century ago, serve to protect the bases from which we can hurl unanswerable blows at our enemy. We should attack every facet of the Iraqi war machine, save the civilian population, waiting for the moment when the machine suddenly collapses.

As is already apparent, we have deployed, and can sustain, air forces of a size and sophistication way beyond the capabilities not only of the allied armadas of World War II, but of the American forces in Vietnam in the early 1970s. We have already done in two days what it took almost two weeks to do during the so-called Christmas bombings of 1972, and an intense air attack can be sustained for months if necessary. As the weeks wear on, the Iraqi military, particularly but not only the forces in Kuwait, will find itself short of water, fuel, spare parts, and ammunition. Most important of all, it will find itself subject to attacks against which there are simply no counters—bombing from airplanes that can fly above the anti-aircraft shells or in the cover of darkness. This psychological equation is of the utmost importance, for what we must demonstrate to the Iraqis and to the world is that we can make this a completely unequal contest, in which there is simply no proportion between the damage we can inflict and the damage we will suffer.

But can we be certain of victory in such a war? Surely at least as certain as we are in the case of a ground war, which may not end with the liberation of Kuwait, or which might bring with it a price that would make success politically meaningless. We face in Iraq a totalitarian regime, and it is the nature of such states to display a smooth and adamantine surface until the moment before they crumble. When the collapse comes, it will resemble that of Ceausescu's Romania in its suddenness. An air siege will act like a particularly ferocious and vastly accelerated program of sanctions, enfeebling the Iraqi regime and economy without imposing high human costs on Iraq's enemies. At the same time, it will achieve objectives that sanctions could not, namely the physical destruction of most if not all of the Iraqi unconventional weapons programs and the Iraqi arsenal of planes, tanks, and missiles. Such a strategy may take months, not weeks, to work, but its costs would be known, and its hazards few.

This strategy has a number of requirements if we are to pursue it successfully, but two stand out. First, the president must explain it to the public, which must be convinced that it is working; this requires a willingness to speak in more than generalities about the purposes of this war and the way it has gone. The Pentagon has, thus far, kept the press at arm's length, feeding it footage of airplanes taking off and the occasional announcement about numbers of Scud missiles fired at Dhahran. Popular support of the war, however, demands that the American people understand the president's strategy and believe that they see progress in implementing it. Less impatient and less gullible than some in the Pentagon think, they can sit out a long war, but only if they have at least a rough sense of what is going on. The administration has succeeded thus far despite its poor handling of the domestic politics of the crisis, and it must pay close attention to the home front now.

The second requirement may be that the president be willing to overrule his defense advisers. This would not be exceptionable were it not that so much of the American government is now convinced that "political interference" is the ultimate sin of the war statesman. In fact, we would not have won any of our wars had presidents not reshaped the strategies proffered them by their military advisers. Roosevelt, for instance, insisted that the United States invade North Africa in 1942 and thereby forgo an invasion of the Continent in 1943, despite the unanimous opinion of his generals and admirals, and in retrospect this was clearly the best decision. War is about politics, and must therefore submit to the control of politicians.

Public declarations about "leaving the war to the military" notwithstanding, it appears that President Bush has, in fact, overruled his commanders at least once, by insisting on war in mid-January, rather than in mid-February as ground commanders in Saudi Arabia clearly preferred. An even greater task looms, for here he must intervene not only with respect to the "when" of an operation but the "how." He is surrounded by talented men, but they seem unlikely to favor an exclusively air campaign. Consider the key military players—the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the director of operations on the Joint Staff, the theater commander, his deputy, and his chief of staff are all either Army generals or Marine infantry generals. His secretary of defense fired the most prominent advocate of an air campaign, and has had more than one nasty public tangle with the U.S. Air Force. Military and civilian, these leaders are able and decent men, and they may, in the end, opt for an air campaign in order to hold casualties down, despite their deepest convictions about the nature of war. But they may not, and if so, it will be the ultimate test of George Bush as commander in chief to probe their arguments and their evidence to the utmost, yielding nothing to military conventional wisdom, and considering only the facts and logic of the case before him. The lives of thousands of young Americans, and the cause for which he has ordered them into battle, will hang on his choice. ●

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BOOKS & TheArts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Directing Debuts

Taxi Blues (MK2) can only be taken seriously as a sociopolitical document, not as a film. Made in 1990, this picture, written and directed by Pavel Lounguine, presents a lot of evidence about Moscow today that vividly supports what we've been reading and seeing on TV. Drunkenness, drugs, hooliganism, rabid nationalism, black marketing, prostitution, resurgent anti-Semitism—all these flood past us. What's worse, we're all aware that these phenomena are not a Soviet monopoly. Most of the newly liberated, formerly Communist countries share these characteristics; decades of cruelly enforced "idealism" didn't cure any viruses, they merely cosmeticized still-running sores.

But we knew all this. Foreknowledge might not matter (we knew the basic facts in, for instance, Tavernier's admirable *Life and Nothing But*), except that Lounguine's screenplay and direction are slam-bang and heavy-handed—so much so that we don't even get a chance to marvel that *Taxi Blues* was made and shown in the USSR. Sheerly as film, its interest is slight.

One evening, in a very glittery Moscow, a group of revelers takes a taxi driven by Chlykov, a taciturn, stolid man who looks and talks like the hero of a 1930s Soviet film. They persuade him to get them an illegal, after-hours bottle of vodka. All the revelers disappear except one, Lyosha, who, we learn, is a famous saxophone player and a Jew.

Drunken Lyosha asks Chlykov to drive him to a huge apartment complex and wait for him. He, too, disappears, and Chlykov, apparently not overbright, waits until dawn, when he realizes he has been stiffed. Next day, he tracks Lyosha to a jazz club and finds him. Then begins a long hate-love relationship between the two, crammed full of shoving, drinking, sweating, falling down, and fighting, that goes on for weeks. For a time Lyosha even works as the driver's porter in order to pay off his debt. Both of them have women with whom they fight and then make love. Both of them are affectionate, nasty, pathetic, disgusting, etc.

Taxi Blues might have been a neat little allegory of hatred being overcome by firsthand knowledge. It might have been *too* neat, of course, but it certainly escapes that snare only to slide into another—a jagged, blurry, repetitious slog through an allegory that is transparent very early and that winds on past three or four endings before it finally finishes.

Along the route, character is delineated by such touches as Lyosha, hung over, taking an aspirin by lifting the flowers out of a vase and drinking the water; or by Chlykov, after fighting with his girlfriend, ravishing her from behind as she leans out the window of his room (with an apartment house across the way). To make sure that we know how greatly Soviets admire American films, Lounguine also includes a car chase.

Sometimes a book reviewer—sometimes even intentionally—will fall into the style of the author he is reviewing. In *Taxi Blues*, Lounguine's first job of directing, he seems to have taken his style from his characters, especially Chlykov. Lounguine's work is just as brusque, vulgar, and fundamentally stereotyped as the taxi driver himself.

One reason I've detailed all the above is that this picture won the prize for best direction at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. Oh, well, the moribund *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (reviewed last week) won the Golden Lion at the 1990 Venice Film Festival.

On the other hand, Dyan Cannon shows us that familiar material need not be tiresome. She wrote and directed **The End of Innocence** (Skouras) and stars in it, and the only disappointing element is the choice of subject. A woman is bullied and exploited from babyhood, beginning with her parents and continuing through her experience with men. She spends her life trying to please. Ultimately betrayed, she breaks down, and the major section of the picture is her experience in a mental hospital, mostly in group therapy as she makes her way toward recovery.

Group-therapy sessions have by now become almost as much a fixture in American films of metropolitan life as party scenes. Cannon writes her therapy sessions no worse than others have done, and she acts them much better than most. She wrote the screenplay, she says, to give herself a good part, and, forbidding as that may sound, it turns out to have been a worthwhile idea. Firstly (if not chivalrously) she is considerably older than the woman she plays, yet, helped by Alex Nepomniaschy's camera, this is

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Awakenings. *Despite some Hollywood touches, this adaptation of Oliver Sacks's book has conviction. Robert De Niro as a post-encephalitic is all right. Ruth Nelson as his mother, Robin Williams as the concerned doctor, are better. (Reviewed 1/7&14/91)* **Dances with Wolves.** *American spaciousness and Indian life, discovered by a Union officer posted to the frontier. Kevin Costner stars in and directs this overlong but gorgeous and often gripping saga. (12/10/90)* **The Godfather: Part III.** *Exactly what it says*—The Godfather: Part III. *This time the plot involves the murder of a pope. Otherwise, for good and less good, it's like its predecessors. (1/21/91)* **Hidden Agenda.** *An adequately made thriller about the troubles in Northern Ireland. Brian Cox is sturdy as an English detective investigating (apparent) IRA murders. Curious omission: no mention of the Unionist majority of the population. (2/4/91)* —**SK**

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never an issue. More important, her spirit and instinct, her empathy with this woman, case-study cliché though she is, never falter. Cannon never strives for effect, always for the feeling—often forgotten by other actors—under the effect. If her performance is not deeply moving because we feel we are following a dossier, it is never false.

But her novel accomplishment is in directing. (Her only previous experience was a short.) The film begins with the hazy view of her mother, looking up at doctor and nurses as she gives birth (and utters an unwelcoming remark). It continues with quick bits of the daughter growing up through various stages of babyhood and childhood until she reaches high school (where she is played by the late Rebecca Schaefer) and loses her virginity.

For the first several minutes, we think we are getting a traditional montage to hurry us to maturity—and the star—with emotional signposts along the way; but then we see that Cannon, with her editor Bruce Cannon (related?), has decided to employ the montage idea as absolute method, rather than as transitional device between conventional sections. That opening is so well done and is carried on so long that it has the effect of mosaic, of pointillist narrative. The whole film is not handled that way, but a good deal of it is, and the rest is affected by it. This method discloses intelligence used with cinematic instinct. The method does almost as much as Cannon's performance to make the picture interesting.

Cannon's worst moves were in the writing and casting of the heroine's Jewish parents, who are squawking cartoons, quite boring, quite incredible even as overstatements. The cast of "characters" in the group-therapy sessions is adequately orchestrated and played. John Heard, recently the chief of hospital staff in *Awakenings*, is again pleasingly mature as the counselor in those sessions. Steve Meadows is quietly, forcefully egotistical as the writer-boyfriend who sends Cannon over the edge.

Point of interest: within a couple of months, two American stars have made propitious debuts as directors, with themselves in leading roles: Kevin Costner with *Dances with Wolves* and now Cannon. Do two swallows make a summer? ●

Harold Pinter finds politics and loses his literary voice.

Sentimental Education

By Michael Levenson

In 1985, in the company of Arthur Miller, with whom he was traveling in Turkey, Harold Pinter dined with the American ambassador. What went wrong is not entirely clear. It is at least agreed that Pinter aggressively challenged the Turkish record on human rights and the role of the United States in supporting the government. The conversation evidently became heated, and in one version of the incident, Pinter and Miller were thrown out of the party. In another version, the situation simply became so indelicate that they left. At the thought of the episode Miller still laughs ruefully and marvels at his companion's violent public anger.

Out of the visit to Turkey came Pinter's play *Mountain Language*, which though only twenty-five minutes long was given a full dress production at the National Theatre in the fall of 1988. Its immediate reference was to the violence endured by the Kurds, but in its wider reference, in its reflections on language and the state, it suggested that the tabooed mountain speech and the agents of suppression were not far away but here near the Thames, if only the English knew.

The Dwarfs
by Harold Pinter
(Grove Weidenfeld, 183 pp., $17.95)

As in Pinter's first torture play, *One for the Road* (1984), the brutality in *Mountain Language* could not be finessed with art talk. It confirmed that what looked like an aberration in 1984 was by 1988 a trend. A playwright who had held himself aloof from political discourse for the first twenty-five years of his career had become a passionate activist: a supporter of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, an out-

Michael Levenson is the author of *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, to be published this spring by Cambridge University Press.

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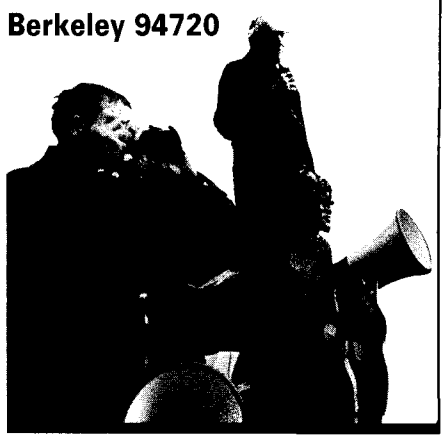

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spoken opponent of the Thatcher government, and most recently a critic of American policy in the Gulf.

The political activism is one salient fact. Another is that since *Betrayal* in 1978 Pinter has written no full-length play, and that for the last twelve years his only new work for the theater has been the two short political pieces. Taken together, these circumstances have made Pinter a kind of cultural policy issue in England, a chronic problem like inflation that invites endless discussion. A recent profile in *The Guardian* made the double gesture that has become familiar. It named Pinter as "our greatest living playwright," and then it asked, "Has politics destroyed his writing?"

Eerily Pinter's writing life has taken on the stresses of the characters in his plays. To watch the recent production of *The Birthday Party* was to recognize how the famous interrogation of Stanley Webber by the sinister intruders Goldberg and McCann—"Why are you getting on everybody's wick?" "Why do you behave so badly?" "What have you done with your wife?"—uncannily anticipated Pinter's current position in the cultural milieu of London. Routinely now he is worried over by supporters, kicked at by his enemies, encouraged, advised, berated, his motives interpreted, his weaknesses probed.

In the summer of 1988 Pinter and his wife, Antonia Fraser, hosted a gathering of left-tending writers and intellectuals, among them Salman Rushdie, Margaret Drabble, Ian McEwan, John Mortimer, Michael Holroyd. Calling themselves the 20 June Group, they vowed to keep meeting (they have done so erratically) to discuss the hopes of left progressives in their time of dwindling influence. When word of the event got out, which it did immediately, the right-wing press feasted on the folly of it all. How dare they? Pampered writers who have had their taxes cut and stand to make a bundle in the Thatcher boom—how dare they sip wine and talk about the homeless? It has become a form of tabloid sport, bashing these champagne radicals. Plainly Pinter is tired of it all, what he calls the "eternal sneering" of the press, but he should not expect it to end soon. For friends as much as enemies, his case is too disturbing to ignore.

In October he turned 60, and partly in honor of that event his work has been enjoying a renaissance in London. Through this late fall and early winter it has been possible to place his earliest work alongside his latest, and the temptation has been, among such as I, to mold it into some perspicuous whole. Only the mold won't take. Almost the first thing one discovers is how unresolved his career now appears, how tense and edgy, devoid of the cozy reassurance promised in the phrase "our greatest living playwright." There was a time, say after *No Man's Land* opened in 1975 with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, when Pinter had ascended beyond the reach of his carping critics and had secured a peak in the mountains of literary eminence. But now he has come down off the mountain to discompose his admirers and to rally the spirits of his opponents.

Thirty-two years ago when *The Birthday Party* opened in London, its "lunacy," its "delirium," its "gibberish" were hooted off the boards. The reviewers murdered it. The play closed after one week, not even salvageable by the belated intervention of Harold Hobson of *The Sunday Times* who wagered his reputation that "Mr. Pinter and *The Birthday Party*, despite their experience last week, will be heard of again." It did not take long for Pinter to make Hobson look like a prophet. By 1960 London had received *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and most notably *The Caretaker*, and Pinter had won some powerful new friends, including Kenneth Tynan and Noël Coward. In an interview of the early '60s he began to set the terms by which he would be judged. "I certainly don't write from any abstract idea," announced Pinter, "and I wouldn't know a symbol if I saw one." Moreover, "I'm not committed as a writer, in the usual sense of the term, either religiously or politically. And I'm not conscious of any particular social function. I write because I want to write."

HAROLD PINTER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Steadily, this view of his work trained the eyes of his audience, especially the eyes of the critics. The plays were, shrug, what they were. Nothing could be gained by filling in the background of the elusive characters, the scheming tramps, the hysterical clerks, the disintegrating husbands, the shifty wives. It would do no good to explain their sudden crises—the bewildering loss of identity, the bleak failure of intimacy, the precipitous fall into violence—in psychological or social terms. In 1964 in "Against Interpretation," Susan Sontag protested that "the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities," and the best readings of early Pinter placed themselves under the sign of an art set free from the tyranny of interpretation. It was a liberating moment in the recent history of taste even if it now looks faintly comic: the spectacle of critics falling over themselves to offer the *least* interpretation of the plays and satirizing one another for still being mired in the swamp of explanation.

What gives new life to this story is that when Pinter became a public political actor in the mid-'80s, he offered a dra-

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matic revision of his entire career. It was not true, he now insisted, that his early work was apolitical. He didn't know why he used to say so. *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and *The Hothouse* (written in the late '50s but not performed until 1980) were deeply political plays. When Goldberg and McCann find Stanley Webber and brutalize him into insensibility, they are not acting as stray malevolent individuals; they are emissaries of the state. *The Birthday Party* is a play about the oppressions of the state.

Appreciate the force of the change. A playwright who had fiercely rejected the need to put his characters in context, to supply reasons for their astonishing actions, or to interpret their obscure motives suddenly offers a definitive explanation. The famous refusal to divulge meaning gives way to authoritative interpretation. The three early works "are all political plays, without any question"—this from a man who told *The Paris Review* in 1966 that "I don't feel myself threatened by *any* political body or activity at all. I like living in England. I don't care about political structures . . ." and "Ultimately, politics do bore me."

What do we do with the contradictions? Not, I think, play the game of niggle and giggle—Pinter has been too consistently interesting to deserve that. Better to worry humbly over the swings in concern, the wildly conflicting self-descriptions, and the evident strain between politics and art. After all, when Pinter tells us that we had all been wrong about his work, he is only doing what his characters in, for instance, *The Collection* (1961) or *Old Times* (1971) have done before him: struggling in the present to determine the character of the past. This fall's production of *The Birthday Party* took no distinctly political turn, but to see it from the perspective of Pinter's recent writing was to feel liberated from the old liberation. It was no longer necessary to fight the twitches of interpretation or to glance away from the social challenge.

It would be too much to say that the mysteries of *The Birthday Party* have at last been solved: the State did it. True, in Pinter's strong reinterpretation of his past he has successfully brought different events into focus: his willingness to risk prison as a conscientious objector when he was 18; his opposition to the Vietnam War; his distress over the fall of Allende. But few will believe that behind the unforthcoming dramatist who saw writing as a "completely private activity" was always an engaged artist in hiding. Why hide? The real question posed by the turn in Pinter's interests is why the flickering social conscience finally blazed into political passion, and a short answer is Margaret Thatcher.

Pinter's unwillingness, or inability, to write a full-length play and his public activism coincide almost exactly with the beginning of Thatcher's rule. *Betrayal* was performed in 1978, Thatcher was elected in 1979, and it seems right to say that Thatcher gave him political speech even as she very nearly muted his literary voice. It would be pleasant, Pinter has mused, to write a poem about old friends, or the sea, or the sun, but it is no longer possible. The crisis is too pervasive. It covers the sun. Indeed what has both irritated his enemies and stiffened his own resolve is Pinter's conviction that the crisis in human rights in Britain has been on the same order as that in Turkey or Eastern Europe: "We are as much a satellite of the USA as Czechoslovakia was of Russia"—to which the American ambassador to Britain has sharply responded that Pinter "would not be Vaclav Havel even if Britain were Czechoslovakia."

Brooding heavily on his own role in the social crisis, Pinter has come to a stern view of the relations between art and politics. In 1988 he reflected that

> The great thing about writing plays is you don't think. I'm putting it quite badly, but the fact is in order to write what's called imaginative literature, you have to let some-

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thing go, you have to release the imagination. If you think too much you are simply not going to do that, you are going to inhibit imagination. There is a tension between being creative—i.e., not thinking—and living your life as a citizen in which you are obliged to think.

There is a moment in the screenplay of *The Comfort of Strangers* (1990) when you can hear the sound of Pinter thinking. Characters in his early plays had been so cruelly, casually misogynist—the (possibly) cuckolded husband in *The Collection* is advised to "go home and knock [his wife] over the head with a saucepan and tell her not to make up such stories again"—and now in adapting Ian McEwan's fiction to the screen, Pinter strains to clarify his sexual politics and to bring them into line with his anti-Thatcherism. McEwan's novel had shown, subtly and chillingly, how an English couple visiting Venice prepare themselves for the horror they encounter there. The power of masculine advantage inside the couple urges them into the grip of a murderous sadist. Pinter is well placed to render this horror faithfully, which he does. But in the midst of following out McEwan's feminist insight he adds a new sequence in which the sadist looks up from his private obsessions and praises the Thatcher government. What happens at that small moment in the film is what has happened on the large scale in Pinter's last decade: the crisis of personal, as well as public, life has been given a name, and the name is Thatcherism.

It is commonly felt that this has been a bad thing. But just suppose that the problem with *The Comfort of Strangers* is not that politics intrudes for a moment, but that it is only for a moment that the intrusion lasts. Pinter is trying to marry politics and aesthetics. Who should sneer? Whatever the merit of the specific oracular judgments (some are courageous and intelligent, some are stupid and dull), Pinter's rant has helped keep a halting social conversation alive. Sooner or later *Mountain Language* will be seen to be a more important play than *Betrayal*, not only because torture is a graver concern than marital infidelity, but also because there can be few dramatic goals higher than the struggle for a passionate, rigorous, non-didactic social theater. The real question is not how Pinter can get the politics out of his work, but how he can keep the imagination in. How did he ever get trapped in this split between the playwright and the citizen, the unthinking artist and the conscious social being?

"There is no such thing as society"—Thatcher's notorious remark might stand as an epigraph for Peter Hall's big new production of *The Homecoming*, the most elaborate of the current revivals. When he directed the first production in 1965, Hall advised his actors to think of the play as rendering "life in the human jungle." A quarter century later he has preserved this image to guide his view of the working-class North London family that welcomes home a wandering eldest son, an academic teaching in America—only to send him packing once his wife, with her rich sexual favors, agrees to stay on with them. But what is most striking about this revival is the different valence taken on by *The Homecoming* after the coming (and the going) of Thatcher, after the advent of a government that saw social solidarity as a sentimental myth, a lazy pretense.

Now you see Teddy introduce his wife, Ruth, to his father, uncle, and two brothers; you see the nagging, needling, insinuating, and bullying among the five men roused to competition for the woman; finally you see Ruth negotiating a "contract" to abandon her husband and to assume a commanding place in his old household; and no longer do these characters seem inexplicably strange beings who have dropped from the moon. Make no mistake. Home in *The Homecoming* has not suddenly become the family next door, but in 1991 we recognize it as we could not possibly have done twenty-five years ago. When Lenny the pimp grapples with his older brother Teddy in a final battle for Ruth, and when he announces that "we're in the land of no holds barred now," he seems less an alien moral monster than an image (a harsh image) of the going entrepreneurial spirit.

English society has nearly caught up with Pinter. What was once taken as a dark truth—the ferocity of competing egos "in the land of no holds barred"—has almost become a cliché of Thatcherite thought. If Pinter has become so sputteringly angry, so willing to court insult and disdain, this may be because Thatcherism so coolly absorbed the provocation he once represented: if you believe there's no such thing as society, then life in the human jungle appears perhaps less shocking than invigorating. It may have been just the ability of Thatcherism to assimilate his deep imaginative challenges that drove Pinter out of imagination and into thought.

Why not say it bluntly? Pinter is fighting for the survival of his imaginative life. And during this period of crisis, his impulse has been not to lick his wounds in private but to keep himself well in view. The current London scene is thick with Pinteriana. A sixtieth birthday celebration on BBC radio, the revivals of *The Birthday Party*, *The Homecoming*, and soon *Betrayal*, the release of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Comfort of Strangers* with screenplays by Pinter, his preparations to direct a new production of *The Caretaker*, a new volume of collected screenplays, the publication of a novel written some thirty-five years ago—all this makes him perhaps the most visible artist in town. But what is so poignant about the incessant frenetic activity is that it's as if Pinter is trying to ease the pain of his silence by stirring up the noise that surrounds creativity—without the thing itself.

Of all Pinter's recent activities, none has been more curious than the publication of his only novel, *The Dwarfs*, written in the mid-'50s when he was in his mid-20s. Over the years Pinter has made no secret of its existence, nor of his harsh view of it: "It's not good enough to be published." Well, of course it's good enough to be published. What isn't anymore? Still, you can see what he used to mean. The book is tense to the screaming point; it's stylistically chaotic when it's not stylistically derivative. Cast almost entirely in dialogue, the novel follows the disintegrating friendship of three young men, and its only real interest lies not in its pale excuse for a novelistic plot but in certain deliciously crabbed exchanges ("I once thought I was a genius. I'm not. I'm a specimen." "What have I seen, the scum or the essence?"). Inevitably it will be used as a reservoir of insights into the later, stronger work.

The Dwarfs is a patently autobiographical account of Pinter's struggle, artistically and sexually, to grow out of callow youth. He had been raised in a family of Portuguese Jews of modest means living in Hackney in East London. He began writing poetry at 11 or 12; he became a gifted athlete and evidently an athletic lover. Having drifted into drama school, he then drifted further into the life of a touring actor in British provincial theater, performing under the name David Baron. He wrote poetry and read deeply in modernist fiction—Joyce, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Kafka, Faulkner, and above all Beckett.

If there was a single leading condition behind the maturing of Pinter's talent, it was that the enthusiast of modernism remained a citizen of Hackney. The three chief characters in *The Dwarfs*—young men called Mark, Len, and Pete—exist on a plane of rarefied intellectualism highly reminiscent of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, an intellectualism all the sharper for being an instrument of self-torment and a weapon in personal conflict. Len ends part one with this speech:

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> Do you know, I can't step out of bed? I'm unable to step out of the bed. I can't put my foot on the floor. I could stay there, always. Have people come and feed me. They could do that easily enough. Yes, you don't know. You don't know what you've got in this room. A sack of old bones. But can't you understand? I can't even commit suicide. It's got to be a decision. That's an action. I can't act. I'm not justified in committing suicide. It would be worthless, meaningless. Suicide isn't meaningless. It's an action. That's what it is.

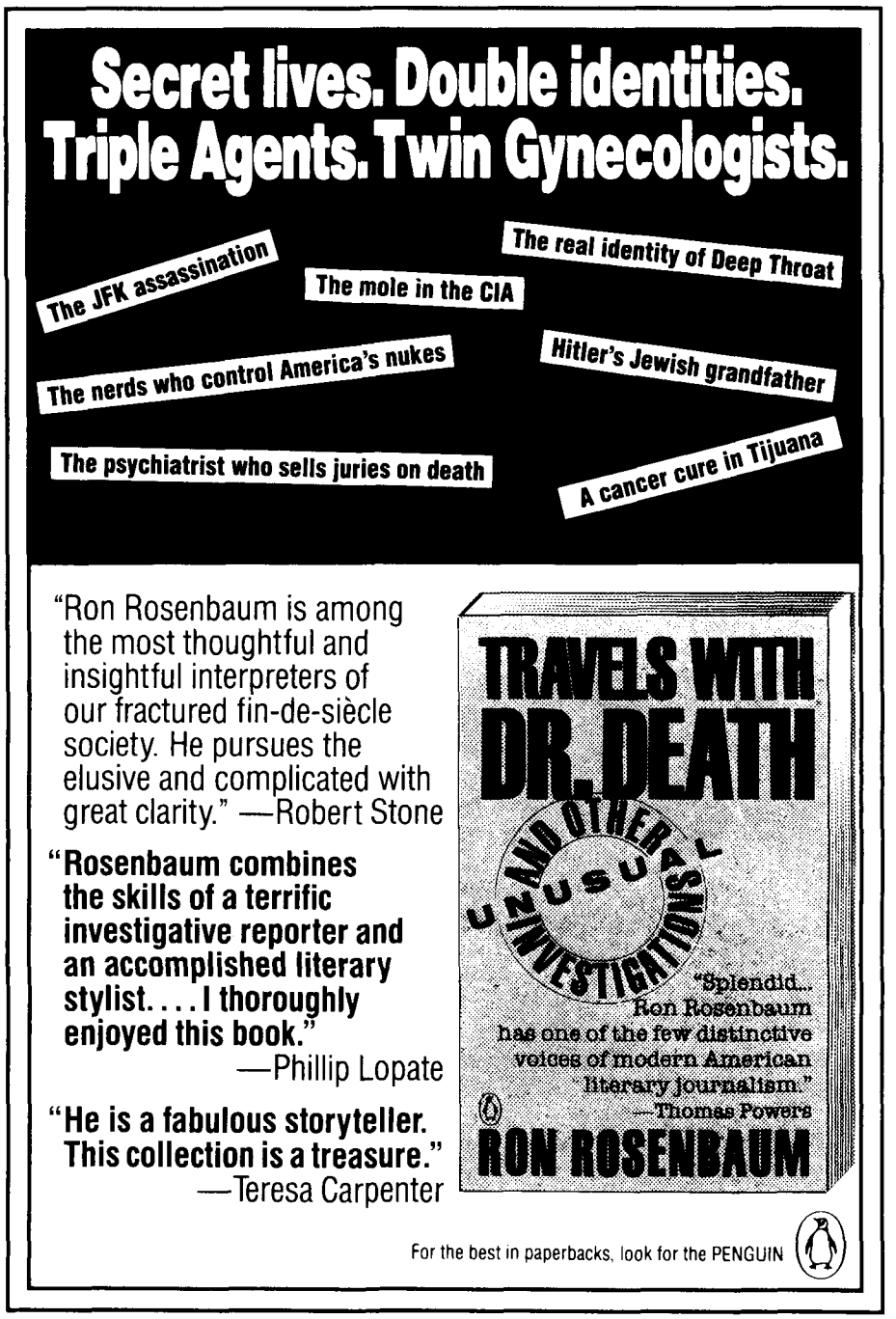
This is the kind of thing they say to one another. But they also make tea, make love, follow sports news, worry about bus schedules. Part of what has always distinguished Pinter from his modernist fathers is that he has never been an internationalist desperate to escape his local culture, has never thrilled to the prospect of exile. He has been instead a keen participant in many ordinary social practices. His love of cricket is legendary; he has lived in the small rooms, eaten the corn flakes, chased the buses. This is what saves *The Dwarfs* from deeper failure, and despite its weaknesses puts it on the path to *The Birthday Party*. Beckett is without question his most important predecessor, but a Beckett absorbed by the common life of Hackney, London. It is no slight to Pinter to describe his best achievement as Hackneyed Beckett.

No doubt Pinter's deep Englishness is what has allowed him to nourish political convictions unimaginable for a Joyce or a Beckett. But it may also be his entanglement in old customs, old dispositions, that stirs archaic feelings, especially unreconstructed sexual feelings, troubling for these politics. Believing so firmly that imagination must be fed from roots beneath thought, Pinter places himself at the mercy of personal and social instincts hard to fit into his ideal of conscious citizenship.

A fourth character appears in *The Dwarfs*, a young schoolteacher named Virginia who is romantically appended to Pete. In 1960 when Pinter quarried the novel to make a short radio play with the same name, Virginia disappeared from the work as if in acceptance of Pete's argument that the three male friends constitute a "unit," a "church," which must always see a woman as an outsider. The attempt to sustain the solidarity of male friendship in the face of corrosive individualism—this is what drives the stuttering plot of *The Dwarfs*, and it is not surprising that Virginia would appear extraneous. Now Pinter says that her absence from the play is why it failed. His sympathies, he says, are all with her; she comes out "all right"; she is "central." But in what possible sense is this true? Virginia is back in the plot all right, ready to be totally humiliated by Pete until she takes refuge from his verbal torture in Mark's well-practiced bed. In her last scene she draws Mark to her while he worries that Pete thinks he's a fool.

Much of Pinter's recent work has taken violence against women as the register of political tyranny. In *Mountain Language*, and in the screenplays for *The Comfort of Strangers* and especially *The Handmaid's Tale*, power is centrally understood as the advantage men enjoy over women. And yet this tough sexual politics occurs against a murky background. Reflecting on the origins of *One for the Road*, Pinter has told a story. At a party he met "two Turkish girls, extremely attractive and intelligent young women." He asked them about a recent trial in Turkey, about Turkish military prisons, about torture. They answered that the prisoners were probably all Communists:

> "But what do you have to say about torture?" I asked. They looked at me and one of them said, "Oh, you're a man of such imagination." I said, "Do you mean it's worse for me than for the victims?" They gave yet another shrug and said, "Yes, possibly." Whereupon instead of strangling them, I came back immediately, sat down,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and, it's true, out of rage, started to write *One for the Road.*

Dwell on it, this picture of Pinter haranguing two Turkish women at a party until he becomes so enraged that he makes his breakthrough into political drama. To rub their "extremely attractive" noses in the reality of torture—so much tension is in this desire. The incident confirms what the whole career suggests, that rage against women is a chief source of his imaginative energy. All through his writing they can be found, the mother who devours, the aunt who pecks, the secretary who waddles, the wife who betrays, all irritating the plot into motion. Dwell on Pinter's verbal aggression, his now famous propensity for erupting at decorous parties and battering other guests with his moral fury. The interrogator is so common a figure in his drama and so central to his political critique that it makes the mind's knees grow weak to realize that in his life *he* is the harsh epitome of verbal violence that his plays so relentlessly expose.

Pinter is not responsible for his dreams; but he has made himself responsible for what he does to ours. The unrelenting interrogation, the verbal assault, the taunt, the threat, the tease, especially as they are directed at women—these disagreeable habits seem to emanate from deep in Pinter's fantasy life. All the more impressive then that he has been able to use his confessedly violent disposition to feed his terrible portraits of social tyranny. But it cannot be surprising that he is badly blocked as a writer. How could it be otherwise when he has resolved to remain both the literary purist who writes from instinct and the active citizen who vows to be politically correct? His remaining decades are bound to be storm-tossed unless and until—improbable day—what he wants and what he wants to want have become at last the same. ●

The Virtues and the Interests

By Gordon S. Wood

Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America by Isaac Kramnick

(Cornell University Press, 304 pp., $42.50, $14.95 paper)

History may have come to an end, but the writing of history surely has not. The vigorous battles over the nature of political thinking in the eighteenth-century English-speaking world, in which this energetic book by Isaac Kramnick is the most recent contestant, suggest that historical polemics are alive and well. This should not be surprising, for the stakes in these historical arguments about eighteenth-century political culture are very high—they are nothing less than the kind of society that we have been, or ought to become.

The historiographical debate in which Kramnick is engaged has been going on for nearly a generation. During the previous century or more, as Kramnick points out, the scholarly world assumed that the seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke was the patron saint of English and American political culture in the eighteenth century, and that Locke's liberalism, with its stress on individuality and personal rights, dominated thinking in that enlightened and revolutionary age. Private property and private liberty seemed to reign supreme in the English-speaking world, and Locke was their symbol. Leslie Stephen believed that "Locke expounded the principles of the Revolution of 1688 and his writings became the political bible of the following century."

Americans were even more liberal and individualistic. The Declaration of Independence, it was argued, was pure Locke. As Carl Becker put it, "The lineage is direct, Jefferson copied Locke." For the historian Merle Curti, the "Great Mr. Locke" was "America's philosopher." Although most scholars seemed to celebrate the power of Lockean liberalism in American culture, some like Louis Hartz despaired of the selfishness and competitive individualism bred by such liberalism (or capitalism, for that is what it amounted to). For Hartz, America was hopelessly capitalistic and Lockean. "Locke," he wrote in 1955 in his influential *The Liberal Tradition in America,* "dominates American political thought as no thinker anywhere dominates the political thought of a nation."

Against this scholarly background in which Locke was nearly everything, one can begin to appreciate the remarkable historiographical upheaval that has occurred since Hartz wrote. It began in the 1960s with some British scholars like John Dunn attempting to show that Locke was very much a man of his time, preoccupied not with the possessive individualism of the capitalistic future, but with the patriarchy and religion of the medieval past. At the same time some American historians, led by Caroline Robbins and Bernard Bailyn, were revealing a political culture in the eighteenth-century English-speaking world that we scarcely knew existed—a neoclassical culture that emphasized virtue, corruption, and the public good rather than private rights and profit-making.

And soon others were adding their voices to the assault on the supposed liberal and Lockean origins of Anglo-American culture. Gary Wills, in a book on the Declaration of Independence, replaced Locke with the Scottish moralist Francis Hutchinson as the dominant influence on Jefferson, arguing that Jefferson was far more concerned with benevolence and communal values than with individual rights. Other historians in America and Britain were simultaneously discovering a communitarian, precapitalistic, aristocratic, and religious mentality in the English and American worlds of the eighteenth century that historians too eager to anticipate the future had covered with a veneer of Lockean liberalism.

It was left to J. G. A. Pocock to draw out in a single monumental book the implications of many of these studies for what was already being called the "republican synthesis." In *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,* which appeared in 1975, Pocock linked the works of the historians working in fifteenth-century Florence with the works of historians working in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world to form what he likes to call the "paradigm" of an Atlantic republican tradition.

Pocock argued that, contrary to what generations of historians used to think, eighteenth-century Anglo-American thought had its origins not in Locke and the rights of Englishmen, but in Machiavelli and the virtuous state. Out of the writings of antiquity, Machiavelli and other Renaissance thinkers put together a body of thought that has been called "civic humanism" or "classical republicanism." This Renaissance thinking revived the classical belief that man was by nature a political being who achieved his greatest moral fulfillment by participating as a citizen in a self-governing repub-

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lic. True liberty was positive, realized by the people's virtue, or by their willingness to sacrifice their private interests for the sake of the public good. To be completely virtuous, men had to be independent, free of the occupations and petty interests of the marketplace.

Citizens, as Aristotle said, could "not live a mechanical or commercial life," since they had to have "leisure to develop their virtue." Therefore landed gentry who, as Adam Smith said, did not have to exert themselves for profit, or farmers who, as Jefferson said, were free of "the casualties and caprice of customers," were the best leaders and the most virtuous citizens for a republic; they alone were capable of disinterested judgment on behalf of the public good. The greatest enemy of virtue, therefore, was commerce and the interestedness it engendered.

These classical and Renaissance ideals were invoked by seventeenth-century Englishmen, particularly the republicans Milton, Nedham, and Harrington, and were carried into the eighteenth century by "country party" thinkers who ranged from radical Whigs like John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon to Tories like Lord Bolingbroke. Not only was this classical republican tradition set in opposition to the unprecedented financial and commercial developments of Hanoverian England (a subject about which Kramnick has written in an earlier book), but it also formed the basis of the Americans' revolutionary ideology of the 1760s and '70s. The language of this country and opposition ideology was not liberal, Lockean, and individualist; it was, Pocock said, "one of virtue, corruption, and reform, which is Machiavellian, classical and Aristotelian, and in which Locke himself did not figure." Thus the American Revolution, far from being a progressive event moving America into a new liberal, capitalistic world, was for Pocock "the last great act of the Renaissance." America was born in a "dread of modernity."

The significance of this "republican synthesis" for historians and other scholars can hardly be overestimated. It spilled out of the eighteenth century to affect the scholarly world in ways that the historians who created it had never anticipated. Both British and American historians used this civic humanist tradition to reinterpret everything from the liberalism of Adam Smith to the Federalist-Republican struggle in the 1790s. Eventually even thinkers in other disciplines—political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and especially legal scholars—from both the right and the left began imaginatively exploiting this "republican synthesis."

All sorts of intellectuals discovered in the communalism and public citizenship of classical republicanism a respectable alternative to the excessive liberal emphasis on private interests and individual rights that seemed to plague American society and politics—an alternative, moreover, that, unlike Marxism, was an authentic part of America's heritage, indeed, central to its revolutionary beginnings. Political philosophers like Michael Sandel have sought to substitute a republican good in place of liberal rights, and sociologists like Morris Janowitz have proposed educating people in civic consciousness. It was legal thinkers like Cass Sunstein, however, who seemed most taken with the practical implications of the republican revival: some of them argued for tighter regulation of pornography and other forms of expression harmful to civic virtue, and others invoked public needs to curtail the rights of private businesses to move or otherwise disrupt the community. All held out a vision of a political world in which self-interested conflict and pluralistic log-rolling might give way to collective deliberation and a common concern for the public good.

But at the very moment that scholars from other disciplines were making so much of this "republican synthesis,"

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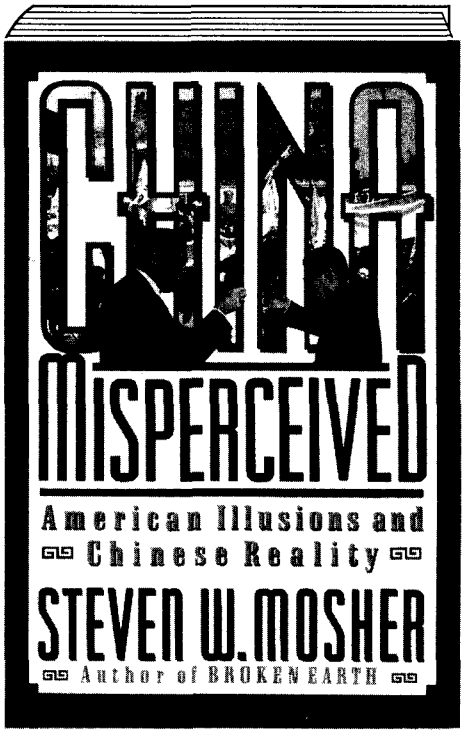

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historians of the eighteenth-century English-speaking world were rediscovering Locke all over again. In this rediscovery, nobody has been more important than Isaac Kramnick. His new book is largely a collection of polemical essays that he has written over the past decade or so, in a vigorous effort to bring back some balance to our understanding of eighteenth-century Anglo-American political culture. Thus the book is not a single straight-line argument, but rather a series of arguments all more or less saying the same thing from different perspectives, indeed, mostly from the perspectives of selected British radicals such as Joseph Priestly and James Burgh.

Kramnick's major point is that the dominance of republicanism has been exaggerated. The emphasis on the civic humanist tradition may have been appropriate, he says, for the first part of the eighteenth century, for the aristocratic world of Swift and Bolingbroke and the other Augustans about which Kramnick wrote an earlier book. But it is not appropriate for the latter part of the eighteenth century, for the bourgeois world of Priestly and Paine and the democratic revolutions of the 1770s, '80s, and '90s.

Classical republicanism, argues Kramnick, was elitist, hierarchical, and nostalgic, and it had little to offer important new social groups of artisans, shopkeepers, manufacturers, and other members of the petite bourgeoisie. These middle-class people were usually religious dissenters, and had none of the independence from the market that the landed gentry presumably had. They had "interests," their property was small, mobile, and the consequence of labor, and they were deeply involved in buying and selling.

Even America's farmers in the late eighteenth century were far from being backward-looking, uncommercial yeomen free of "the casualties and caprice of customers." As Joyce Appleby, one of the other neo-Lockean scholars rediscovering liberalism in the eighteenth century, has shown, they were busy selling their foodstuffs all over the Atlantic world. Such busy money-making people were less concerned with virtue and community than with equality and private rights. They were in fact precisely those ignoble, interested, working people who Aristotle had said were ill-fitted to be virtuous public-spirited citizens; they had no capacity to be disinterested umpires over the various interests. They had no concern, moreover, for the classical value of political participation. Indeed, they condemned the public world and government as the source of privilege and evil, and put all their faith in the private world and the natural harmony of society.

Finally, argues Kramnick, these bourgeois radicals were the major stimulus behind the democratic movements during the last part of the century, including the American Revolution. They participated in these movements not in a mood of classical anxiety over corruption and loss of virtue, as Pocock would have it, but in a spirit of liberal promise for the expansion of private rights and individual prosperity.

Kramnick's argument is a powerful one, and no doubt it is a healthy corrective to the exaggerations of the "republican synthesis," especially as Pocock (or Kramnick himself in his earlier book) defined it. Picturing late eighteenth-century Anglo-American radicals as nostalgic, pessimistic, and opposed to commerce is, as Kramnick says, "fundamentally flawed"; it misses all the exuberance, optimism, and progressive pursuits of happiness by countless middling people in the period. In his eagerness to refute Pocock, however, Kramnick may have embraced his opponent too closely. He has ended up accepting Pocock's terms of the argument, simply substituting a radical bourgeois "paradigm" for Pocock's republican one.

This exchange of "paradigms" misconstrues the historical problem. The question of which tradition in the late eighteenth century was more dominant—republicanism or liberalism—is badly posed. It assumes a sharp dichotomy between two clearly identifiable traditions that eighteenth-century reality will not support. None of the historical participants, including the Founding Fathers, ever had any sense that he had to choose between republicanism and liberalism, between Machiavelli and Locke. Jefferson could believe simultaneously, and without any sense of inconsistency, in the likelihood of America's becoming corrupt and in the need to protect individual rights from government. These boxlike categories of "classical republicanism" and "liberalism" are the inventions of historians, and as such they are distortions of past reality.

Historians must use categories, to be sure, in order to make sense of a complicated reality; but such categories should flow out of the culture and circumstances of the period studied. In the historiographical debate over eighteenth-century Anglo-American thought, unfortunately, the leading scholars have anachronistically invented too many "paradigms" and forced too much material into them. Perhaps this is in part because the leading contestants were trained as political theorists and not as historians. Kramnick, at any rate, is as enamored of "paradigms" as Pocock. In his chapter analyzing the debate over the federal Constitution in 1787-88, Kramnick posits no less than four distinct "paradigms" or "idioms" that the participants drew upon. And even "this list" of four "is not exhaustive," he says; but he leaves "to colleagues the explication of several other, less discernible idioms of politics in the discourse of 1787."

No wonder Kramnick describes the debate as a "confusion of paradigms." He is amazed at the "profusion and confusion of political tongues among the founders." No one idiom of politics "dominated the field, and the use of one was compatible with the use of another by the same writer or speaker." The Founding Fathers, he says, "lived easily with that clatter; it is we, 200 and more years later, who chafe at their inconsistency." But instead of questioning all this paradigm-creating and paradigm-fighting, Kramnick ends by simply stating that there was no "decisive victor" in the "paradigm battle" over the Constitution. "Liberalism scored no watershed victory over republicanism," and America became a country dedicated to "paradigmatic pluralism."

Still, despite this mechanistic categorization, there is no doubt that something changed in the late eighteenth century in both America and Great Britain, and that a mode of thinking we came to call liberalism emerged in the early nineteenth century. Yet it is very difficult to describe the transformation in terms of "paradigms" struggling with one another; Anglo-American political culture was too complicated for that.

Take the seemingly simple issue of whether public officials should be paid salaries. Kramnick believes that the British radical James Burgh's suggestion that government officials "should serve the public for nothing" (a view echoed by Benjamin Franklin in the Constitutional Convention for all members of the executive branch) expresses "a central theme" in emerging eighteenth-century liberalism—the belief in "equal opportunity in the race of life." But in fact the idea that public service was an obligation of those who had wealth, leisure, and talent went back to Aristotle and Cicero and was an integral part of the classical republican view that unpaid political leaders should stand above the interests of the marketplace in order to make disinterested judgments. In contrast, paying salaries to public officials, treating them as paid workers, represented the liberal and democratic future, for it eventually

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created what the Tory Jonathan Boucher contemptuously called "a new species of public men, who ... pursue politics merely as a gainful occupation."

But it is not simply Kramnick's categories for describing the culture that seem crude and anachronistic; his categories for describing the society are, too. Fundamental to his argument is his positing of a new social class, the bourgeoisie, which was the producer of this new radical ideology. As historians of eighteenth-century France are at last discovering, defining this bourgeoisie precisely is not easy.

Webster's Third International defines the bourgeois as members of "the social class whose income derives from the profits of commercial and industrial enterprise especially as distinguished from the landed gentry, wage earners and farmers, and sometimes the professions." No doubt we can agree that new social groups were emerging in the late eighteenth century and that middling artisans and shopkeepers and even large manufacturers like Josiah Wedgwood might legitimately be labeled bourgeois. But was the slave-holding planter Thomas Jefferson bourgeois? Or was Benjamin Franklin, who in any traditional sense never worked a day in his life after he retired from business and became a gentleman at the age of 42? If the likes of Jefferson and Franklin are to be made into bourgeois, then so, too, must the principal intellectual opponent of the bourgeoisie, Edmund Burke. (Kramnick has already wrestled with this self-created problem in an earlier controversial book on the aristocratic-bourgeois "ambivalence" of Burke.)

Ultimately Kramnick is forced to fit together his ideological category of radical liberalism with his social category of the bourgeoisie, and the consequences are confusing. He locates the concern for private rights largely in the new middle class and forgets that a concern for individual rights and liberties, including private property, was integral to the common law and went back deep into the English medieval past. Despite the emphases of ancient republicanism, it is in fact doubtful that Englishmen ever much cared about classical political participation, or positive liberty, except insofar as it protected their individual negative liberties.

Kramnick also asserts that the urging of governmental suppression of luxury and promotion of virtue can be understood as an aspect of the new radical liberalism when actually it can be better understood in traditional paternalistic and religious terms. He assumes, too, that contempt for pride of birth belongs exclusively to the new liberal bourgeoisie, without realizing that it lay at the heart of eighteenth-century enlightened thought. It was expressed as much by hereditary aristocrats like Chesterfield as it was by servants like Beaumarchais's and Mozart's Figaro. After all, it was largely audiences of aristocrats who applauded the humanist and egalitarian values proclaimed by Figaro. "Radical chic" was not an invention of the twentieth century.

Still, when all is said and done, Kramnick has undoubtedly gotten hold of a central truth about the eighteenth century that has been too long ignored. Somehow the hierarchical and aristocratic eighteenth-century Anglo-American world turned into the recognizably modern, liberal, and democratic society of the early nineteenth century. Explaining that epoch-making transformation has more than passing significance for us. Not only will it help us better understand the historical connection between the rise of democracy and the growth of capitalism in the West, but it also may help us better appreciate the momentous events taking place today in Eastern Europe. For the desire of ordinary people to consume material goods and to pursue their personal happiness here and now may turn out to be the basic and enduring source of a truly democratic society.

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America's Illusions

BY KAREL VAN WOLFEREN

Agents of Influence by Pat Choate

(Knopf, 296 pp., $22.95)

Most aspects of Japanese political and economic life are not mysterious. They are like the way things are done in the United States, only more so, *much* more so. So much more so, sometimes, that they are best viewed in an analytic category of their own. Take favoritism. Americans easily recognize the phenomenon of privileged access, of mutual back-scratching, of friends at the bank, of extralegal if not unlawful "sweetheart" deals and arrangements. What Japan has to offer in this realm is so much richer, however, that comparisons with the American case are not much use in predicting outcomes.

Informal relationships among members of the large Japanese elite—the bureaucrats, the industrial federations, the giant financial institutions, the corporate groupings, and a couple of handfuls of prominent politicians—and their informal transactions form the main substance of Japanese political life. Whatever exists in the way of informal power relations in other non-Western societies does not begin to compare to the Japanese version in complexity and in efficacy. Informal cartels and informal agreements about methods of massive financing are essential for the continued success of Japanese "capitalism." The ties among the actors in the Japanese economy are not ultimately determined by considerations of profitmaking, as in run-of-the-mill capitalist states. They are driven, rather, by considerations of mutual protection and long-term shared goals.

Japanese "insiders" are protected and prosper thanks to super-*jinmyaku* (human networks). Outsiders, including some very talented and successful entrepreneurs, need a fortune to buy their attachment to such personalized safety nets. And even when such attachments are bought, protection is still not assured, as the scandal surrounding Hiromasa Ezoe, the founder of the small Recruit business empire, demonstrated. Ezoe, an outsider business genius, bought protection by selling preflotation shares to many prominent figures in the LDP and other politically relevant circles. But an unhappy combination of circumstances, exploited by powerful, more established industrialists and their allies behind the scenes, brought him down. The law does not mean much in such a setting; and certainly it does not provide a refuge for the victims of these exercises of extralegal power.

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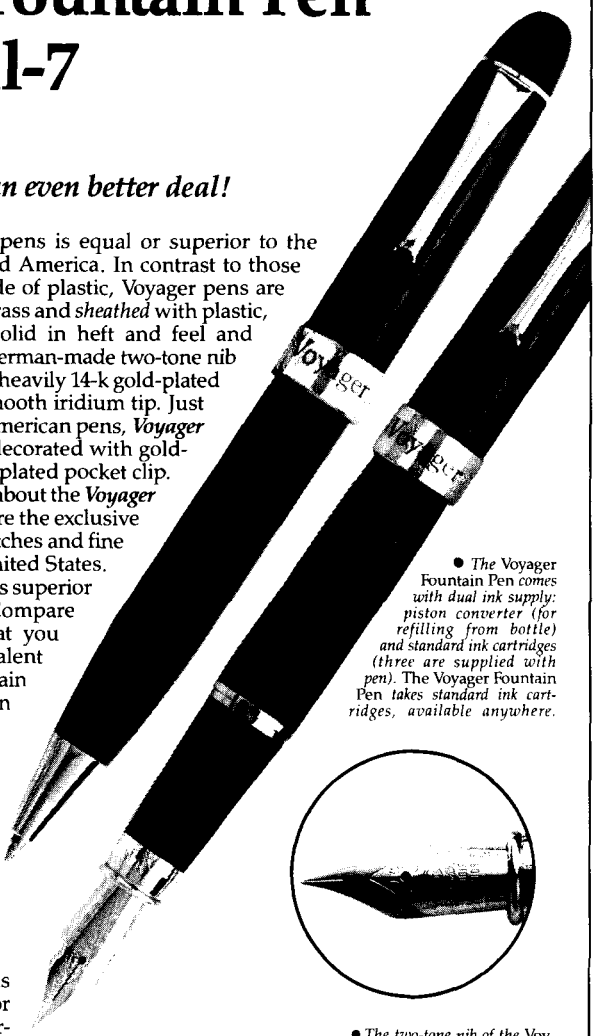

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To assume that the businessmen and the bureaucrats who help expand Japan's international economic power adopt radically different methods when they leave home would be highly unrealistic. Japanese *jinmyaku* are spread everywhere. This is often a matter of hooking up to elaborate systems of favoritism that already exist in such places as Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. It is not only in Southeast Asia, however, that conditions are conducive to the proliferation of Japanese methods. As *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (Japan's counterpart to *The Wall Street Journal*) put it, "Influence in Washington is just like in Indonesia. It's for sale." Japanese corporations, industrial federations, and government bureaucrats have discovered very profitable ways to adapt a venerable American institution—lobbying—to their uses. In the process they may have already changed it.

That quotation appears in Pat Choate's book, the first extended account of some of the ways that Japanese interests methodically manipulate the American political and economic system. Given that the American and Japanese economies are the two largest in the world, that their compatibility is beginning to be questioned, and that developments in their relationship will probably be decisive for the future of the world economy, Choate's account hasn't come a moment too early. (Full disclosure statement: I know Choate, and he adduces some of my own experience to illustrate several of his points.) The Japanese powerhouse gives it greater influence over the United States than the Soviet Union ever had (except, of course, for the threat of nuclear war), or is likely to have now that it is an economic basket case. The threat posed by the Soviet Union existed in a shadow world of what might happen if the modus vivendi between the two superpowers broke down. Japanese influence, by contrast, is important in the real world.

The flare-ups in the economic conflict between Japan and the United States are quite regular. They have become familiar phenomena, though they are noticed in Japan much more than in the United States. American "ultimata," threatening dire consequences if the Japanese market remains inhospitable to imported goods, result in Japanese "market opening packages," "action plans," and, most recently, a "Structural Impediments Initiative" (supposedly tackling structural import barriers). At some point during such minicrises, tensions are described as having reached a new peak, which is then followed by a familiar compromise on the part of Japan's gov-

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ernment officials. The compromises are minuscule, even though they are usually advertised by both sides as major breakthroughs in the relationship. And they never accomplish their announced aim. Veteran observers know that they can look forward to a repeat performance when electoral or other American government preoccupations permit.

After you have observed a couple of these bilateral crises, it becomes fairly clear that they are part of a charade that no journalist or scholar or politician ought to take seriously. The question that old Tokyo hands always end up asking is, how did the Japanese side get away with it this time? For it has happened more than once that last-minute nightly sessions "to save the relationship" squeezed concessions out of Japanese officials that different U.S. negotiators had squeezed out of the same officials only a couple of years before.

Choate's book throws light on the circumstances behind these curious results (as did Clyde Prestowitz's *Trading Places* three years ago) by laying bare the intricacies of American self-deception. His account leaves one again with a sense of wonder at the Japanese understanding of American weaknesses, and with admiration for the effectiveness with which these weaknesses are exploited. There is one obvious American motive that plays into Japanese hands: American negotiators are well aware that they may amass considerable wealth after their short-term government service if they get themselves on the payroll of the Japanese friends of the Japanese officials with whom they negotiate. But *Agents of Influence* will entertain the connoisseur of the Japanese scene for other reasons, too. It isolates, by showing them in a foreign setting, a number of political phenomena that are vital characteristics of contemporary Japan.

The hostility of the *jinmyaku* system to legal structures as regulators of society and the economy means that extraordinary devices are required to keep social order. The aim is to intimidate weaker parties into obeying the extralegal demands placed upon them by stronger parties. Some of these devices are being transferred to the United States in an attempt to keep "order" in the bilateral relationship, and to achieve a Japan-friendly "order" in the American economy. Consider an example of how Japan's informal power works in practice.

Four years ago a medium-sized Japanese "outsider" company called Lion's Oil saw a potential fortune in importing refined oil from Singapore. The import of refined oil would have brought significant price benefits for consumers, since all refining of oil for Japan has taken place in Japan, in line with an informal arrangement protecting the Japanese refining industry. Neither the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) nor the refiners' association had thought that anyone would have the temerity to disturb this time-honored arrangement. For this reason, there was no law and no "administrative guidance" prohibiting Lion's Oil from doing what it set out to do. But MITI's reaction was instantaneous. It made sure that the Lion's Oil credit lines were cut, and it proved to have enough influence in Singapore to enforce this measure with the banks in that city.

Such a case holds lessons for Americans. The issue at stake is not the immediate fortunes of specific companies, the U.S.-Japan trade imbalance, or American manufacturing as a whole, but the spread of unseen external political control. Informal bureaucratic interference with entrepreneurial activity is perfectly acceptable in the Japanese scheme of things, and it is bound to spread to the United States with the increased importance of Japanese financial institutions here. In some important cases, the allocation of funds through bank lending or underwriting is likely to be decided in Tokyo on the basis of political rather than economic considerations. The criterion will not be profits, that classical capitalist criterion, but the long-term protection of Japanese interests.

To maintain Japanese order, to allow the exercise of discretionary bureaucratic and big-business power (the two are very difficult to disentangle in Japan), some tactics are employed that will strike Americans as dishonest or unethical. But those tactics are an accepted fact of life in Japan, and they emerge very clearly from Choate's account. The most important one is the subtle intimidation that permeates Japanese interorganizational relations, which seems to work well in the American environment. Choate gives vivid details, among other cases, of the effective intimidation practiced by Toshiba. After the U.S. government imposed sanctions on Toshiba for having sold the Soviet Union the means to manufacture silent submarine propellers in violation of COCOM rules, Toshiba forced American companies to join its massive lobbying campaign to neutralize the sanctions by threatening to stop supplying parts on which they had become dependent. There is also the example of AUTOPAC (a political action committee operated by auto importers and infiltrated by Japanese interests), with its hit list of elected officials who vote against "free trade" and who can be defeated with last-minute spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars in close electoral races.

Successful operation in the informal system at home requires much detailed secret and semi-secret information. For the sake of self-preservation, Japanese institutions spy on each other with the intensity of superpower rivals. And they have exported this habit, too, to the United States. Choate describes persuasively how Japanese interests often know about government decisions before American administration insiders connected with the issue have been informed about them.

Lobbying is a wonderfully democratic tool, but when dealing with the pooled operations that characterize Japanese efforts, abroad as much as at home, this democratic asset is easily corrupted. Lobbying is generally justified in the United States on the grounds that it is a method equally available to all parties, and therefore not a cause of unequal advantage. Choate should rattle such egalitarian goodwill, at least in the Japanese case. For the American notion of lobbying is false when it comes to the Japanese practice of it. Japanese government agencies and businesses have been able to rig the lobbying game in the United States to

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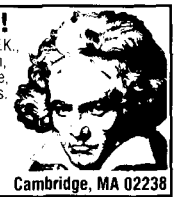

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such an extent that they practically always win, while effective lobbying by American interests in Japan is simply out of the question. The kind of openness that would allow foreign corporations to influence Japanese policy-making would undermine the entire Japanese political structure. The recommendation that the United States try to redress this particular imbalance is simply silly.

An American firm involved in a wrangle with a Japanese firm as a result, say, of predatory tactics hardly has a chance. No matter how large the American corporation, its Japanese counterpart will almost always be able to spend more to buy influence in Washington and have far greater staying power. At the same time, there is no effective legal protection for the wronged party available in Japan. American entrepreneurs and inventors who are deprived of the fruit of their creativity and hard work, through the common tactic of patent-flooding (the predator files "nuisance patents" for small adjustments to the main invention, confusing the issue of ownership), receive little sympathy and almost no effective help from their own government. Most give up the fight almost before it has started.

The powerlessness of the American entrepreneur in a contest with Japan is poignantly illustrated by the tragic example of the Fusion lamp patent-flooding case. Mitsubishi and its American lobbyists managed to appropriate the invention of Fusion System's ultraviolet lamp, which shortens the drying time of specialized inks, adhesives, and other materials from twenty hours to mere seconds. The inventor, Don Spero, did not give in to Mitsubishi's initial intimidation, and fought in vain against a long series of ploys, made possible by Mitsubishi's American lobbyists, to deprive him of the rewards of his invention. Those concerned about the future of the United States as an economic power, and familiar with Japanese practices, will recognize Spero's words as the most important quote in the book: "Japan's political power in Washington is awesome. Mitsubishi and its lobbyists are just sitting there laughing at us. If they can continue to pick off the little guys like me, you can just wave goodbye to America's creative power."

The equal chances argument would never have been acceptable about the Soviet Union in the cold war. Japan, of course, is not an enemy, but a putative ally. It is not a totalitarian state. It does not have a Soviet-type command economy. But the major mistake that Americans make in dealing with it as an economic power is taking for granted that its industrial and political aims are compatible with those of the United States.

Perhaps Japan's most important device for keeping social and economic order is what must be called its management of reality. This allows actual arrangements to coexist peacefully with fictitious official and theoretical reality. While almost everyone defers to the official reality, the actual reality remains protected against destructive scrutiny. A major example is the label "free market economy" that Japanese spokesmen continue to attach to their thoroughly cartelized economy. Most governments, of course, practice some form of reality management. But the Japanese power-holders are the absolute masters of it. Besides the sheer figures involved—the fortunes in fees, the numerous former trade officials, and the number of lobbyists generally—it is this management of reality that sets the Japanese lobbying effort apart from that of other countries.

The aim of Japanese lobbying, more specifically, is to keep Americans believing what Americans want to believe about Japan. What the American outposts of the Japanese foreign ministry, the Keidanren (or federation of industrial associations), through their diverse connections, and individual Japanese corporations have been doing for the past decade or so adds up to nothing short of a propaganda war. Since the late 1950s the string-pullers of Japan's cartelized economy have been working to expand their industrial and financial institutions into highly influential, if not dominating, international entities, serving Japan's national security in its broadest sense. One must always keep in mind that they are motivated by a never explicitly stated, but widely shared, sense that Japan exists in a potentially hostile world and needs to protect itself through ever expanding power. They do not accept that international promises, treaties, or economic agreements can be ultimately reliable. They have evolved the most intricate forms of political protection of economic organizations known to the modern industrial world.

But since the market has always been one of their tools to achieve predetermined (non-market) ends, and since their success with the West, especially the United States, always depended on the Western illusion of sharing basic institutions, they wrapped this all to look like a free market package. Japanese spokesmen have been passing off the Japanese endeavor as capitalism—mixed up with a lot of funny habits and old traditions, to be sure, but capitalism nonetheless, and no less genuine than the American article. Americans want to believe this; they want to assume that Japan was America's best pupil after the war, having followed its free society, free market example long before the Eastern Europeans got around to discovering it. The American government generally starts from the premise that if Japanese economic practices are not yet entirely compatible with its own, they are gradually becoming more compatible, thanks to an inner Japanese evolution and the result of years of hard negotiations.

Japan's propagandists operate in a still fairly hospitable environment. Quite a number of influential parties, moreover, have a stake in sustaining this convergence theory and other wrong suppositions about Japan. Administration officials want everyone to think that their negotiations aiming at Japanese structural changes have gotten somewhere, and that their dependence on Japanese financing is nothing to worry about. The dominant school of American economists is not ready to jettison its faith in the free market as an absolutely basic condition for economic success. Scholars and assorted commentators find it diffi-

After Degas

Madame, displaying a slight rubato
in *Les Sylphides*, says we get more done
the days he does not come to watch.
But, she adds, drawing out the phrase
to a walk, he does not come to watch.

He sees in the slow tracing of an arc
partially described across the room
how even the pain may be ordered,
carefully arranged along a radius
like points the brief moments

of birth sadness beauty sorrow
death made finite to the eye
by a pink shoe descending
through the late half-light
to touch the floor, held

for the mind's completion;
how even the mirror, tilted
slightly upward on its axis, defers
to the ideal, reflecting the archway
and gold-leaf frieze, leaving him

to notice as she turns out
that her shoe needs fixing
and the strap has slipped,
falling from her shoulder
beneath her gathered hair.

CARL CONOVER

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CHRISTIANS SPEAK OUT FOR ISRAEL

The National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel condemns Iraq's attack on Israel and affirms its solidarity with the State and people of Israel in their hour of crisis and promise.

Crisis -- because of the murderous threats and acts of Saddam Hussein. Promise -- because of the momentous ingathering of the immigrants from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia and Israel's continuing commitment to the peace process.

The National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel commends President Bush and the men and women of our armed forces and those of the coalition against Iraq for their courage and sacrifice in protecting the peoples of the Middle East and of the world from the aggressor.

We plead with our Christian sisters and brothers, along with other people of good will, to join us in prayer that God may protect all those serving in the battle, give wisdom to world leaders, and enable peace and justice to prevail in this troubled region. We pray for an early end to the conflagration with a minimum loss of life.

Today the State of Israel is the only country in the Middle East to represent the democratic principles of liberty and of self-government. Christians throughout the world, along with Israelis, desperately want peace between Arabs and Jews. But efforts by outside powers to impose a solution or to link the Israeli-Palestinian Arab peace process to the Gulf crisis will seriously impede the chances for any substantive progress.

The National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel stands at the side of Israel. We urge others to join us in our commitment to America-Israel friendship, alliance and solidarity during these critical days.

Signed by Officers of the NCLCI Executive Committee

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cult to tolerate the thought that the expanding international economic force of Japan could in some crucial respects be inconsistent with goals and methods taken for granted by the United States and the European countries. And most people in most positions do not like to admit that they have allowed themselves to be hoodwinked for years.

Complicating the situation even further is the larger pathology of the Japan-U.S. relationship. The guardians of this relationship have long agreed that the bonds holding the two countries together are fragile and need tender care. Assessments of Japan's political and economic structure that run counter to American expectations are considered a danger to this cause. Thus, at numerous junctures in the history of the disagreements between the United States and Japan, attitudes of American policy-makers have been swayed by the contention, forcefully pushed by Japan's paid and unpaid lobbyists, that an outcome different from what Tokyo desires will seriously threaten the bilateral friendship. It is a ploy that always seems to work.

Americans are particularly vulnerable to Japanese propaganda for the additional reason that they consider morally reprehensible a degree of deceit that is still within the bounds of what is socially permissible in Japan. Americans simply refuse to believe that a people they think of as allies could be fooling them so extensively and so consistently. But American moral squeamishness is bad for Japan in the end, because self-delusions on this scale are untenable in the long run, and likely to cause a backlash. The editor of *The Harvard Business Review*, quoted by Choate, observes that "the longer Japan successfully confounds U.S. leaders into thinking that all the old rules still apply, the longer the transfer of wealth and power can continue unimpeded. It is not Japan's job to inform us of our blind stupidity."

The Japanese officials who bend the truth, and hire American lawyers and former officials to amplify their disinformation, are doing what is expected of them at home. Their task is to maximize the advantage of the institution to which they belong. But the problem, finally, lies not in Japan, but in America. Choate is a step ahead of those who are discovering moral shortcomings in Japan's powerholders when he emphasizes that his book is about American corruption, not Japanese wrongdoing. American structural corruption—not illegal, but highly detrimental to the national interest—is the third-most-important cause of the phenomenal survival of dangerous illusions about Japan. It interacts with the other two: ignorance and stupidity. When the United States wakes up, of course, Japan will be the villain, will be diabolized in the popular American imagination—which will be ugly and unfair, and not at all in America's interest.

The general discussion about the causes of the difficulties between the United States and Japan has long been confused by the red herrings that spokesmen for Japanese interests introduce into it. A favorite is the notion that America must "first put its own house in order." In itself, this is commendable. Obviously, if American economic policy under Reagan had been less stupid, less advantageous for Japanese interests and more advantageous for American entrepreneurs and innovators, the American economy would be better able to withstand the Japanese onslaught. And to the extent that American consumers choose Japanese products because of their superior quality, blaming Japan is only a poor excuse for American industrial incompetence. But all this has nothing to do with the issues raised by Choate.

Choate's book has been attacked, of course, as an exercise in "Japan-bashing"—which brings us to what is probably Japan's most far-reaching propaganda success in America. The term "Japan-bashing," now firmly ensconced in the American debate, has made objective public discussion about Japan almost impossible. Anything one might say concerning Japan that is not to the liking of Japan's spokesmen has a good chance of being referred to as "bashing." (This is a little like the tendency of some of Israel's supporters to tar all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism.) In its failure to differentiate between emotional outbursts and honest analysis, the "bashing" taboo has muted and distorted serious debate on Japan. Very few Americans want to run the risk of being thought of as anti-Japanese. As used by Japanese spokesmen, the term Japan-bashing has even gained the connotation of "racist."

The general weakness in the reporting on Japan by the American media is an important condition for the consistent undermining of American interests. Prominent newspapers, such as *The Washington Post*, give the impression that they do not even try to take Japan seriously. The editorial page content of *The Wall Street Journal* on Japan is widely considered a joke among those well-informed about Japanese practices. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, it rigidly adheres to a belief in the free market nature of the Japanese economy, guided by the neoclassical economic article of faith that an economy can only be successful if free from interference by government bureaucrats.

Most Tokyo-based correspondents have to deal with editors who are ideologically unready for a consistently realistic appraisal of Japan. I recall the trouble one of them had getting a well-informed account of important developments in Japan's financial sector into his paper because he could not "substantiate" with "quotes" the consultation between the finance ministry and the major banks on which he had reported. In reality, of course, anything happening without such consultation would have been earth-shaking news in the Japanese setting. But Japanese officials and bankers are understandably not in the habit of allowing American journalists to quote them about arrangements that don't look good in American eyes. American journalists have to "tell both sides of the story," which in this case means, at best, the truth as they have been able to piece it together, diluted by the half-truths and untruths presented by Japan's propagandists whom they must quote.

Japan's official spokesmen and its American lobbyists can be contradicted by Japan specialists only at the risk of excommunication. A large segment of the relatively small group of American academics concerned with Japanese political and economic subjects is intimidated by what might happen if they get on the wrong side of Japanese foundation officials, consuls general, and others with a say over Japanese academic funding. The result is that similar arguments tend to crop up in several places within a short time to explain away what to American eyes are questionable Japanese methods. (The current main propaganda theme is that *keiretsu*, the "family"-type grouping of large corporations, does not exist, or is not as significant as cartels. This information, endorsed by prominent scholars, reached us just as the United States was becoming aware of their protectionist nature.)

Choate's list of recommendations (mainly aimed at stopping Washington's "revolving door," which makes agents out of administration officials) omits a major necessity. The United States cannot afford to be informed about Japanese political and economic affairs by people whose programs are to a decisive extent financially dependent on the institutions they are supposed to analyze. And his book has other shortcomings. It could have made its case more convincingly as to why American interests are not served by giving Japanese interests unimpeded

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access to institutions that are part of the democratic process, by explaining the incompatibility of American and Japanese economic aims. It would have been more persuasive if it had included an analysis of the coordination within Japan among government agencies, industrial associations, and firms that goes into the buying of American opinion. Still, Choate is one of few who have grasped that Japan is more important to the future of the United States than the Soviet Union. If his book can disturb the orthodoxies that have discouraged many from taking a closer look at the relationship between America and Japan, he will have done both countries a great service.

KAREL VAN WOLFEREN is the author of *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (Knopf).

Bubble, Bubble, Oil and Trouble

BY WALTER LAQUEUR

The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power by Daniel Yergin

(Simon and Schuster, 877 pp., $24.95)

The history of the popular literature on oil can be divided, broadly speaking, into four periods. In the beginning there was Ida Tarbell's muckraking history of Standard Oil, written at the beginning of the century. Her revelations about evil corporate practices were timely, necessary, and very influential. They were followed in the 1920s by a series of books on "oil imperialism," which argued that the oil industry was a most sinister force, an omnipotent force, in world affairs, and that Sir Henri Deterding, owner of Shell, was Soviet communism's most dangerous foe and Nazism's strongest supporter. And then in the 1930s, first in Germany and later in other countries, "in-depth" and largely unpolitical journalistic accounts of various raw materials and industries began to appear. They placed a heavy emphasis on human interest angles, such as the eccentricities of "Mr. Five Percent," the mysterious Callouste Gulbenkian, the international oil dealer who made a fortune out of Iraqi oil, eventually settled in Lisbon, and left some of his huge fortune to a foundation.

More recently, for reasons not entirely clear, the story of oil became "epic" and ,aythic." (Who would have dreamed of writing, for all their economic and political importance and for all the profits that they produced, the fabulous tale of coal or the thrilling saga of iron ore?) Daniel Yergin's book is the crowning achievement of this period of oil literature, and it appears at a time when oil is far more important than ever before. It is the product of years of labor, and it is balanced. Indeed it is sometimes too statesmanlike and reserved in its judgments. It surveys the history of American, British, and Dutch companies, from Drake's first drilling in Titusville, Pennsylvania, to the discoveries in Iran (1908) and Saudi Arabia (in the 1930s); and it deals with the impact of oil on world politics. The book is based not only on the very considerable secondary literature, but also on hitherto unpublished material in state and private archives and on observations and interviews that, as an energy consultant, Yergin has had a unique opportunity to collect.

The Prize had been widely praised for all these achievements, but I find its interpretations difficult to follow at times. Yergin claims his canvas is global, but in fact his focus is heavily on the United States and Western Europe. About Soviet oil, the reader is told very little, even though the Soviet Union is still the greatest producer of oil. There is virtually nothing on China or Indonesia, and little on Venezuela, Algeria, or North Sea oil. More important, there are only a few references to nuclear energy, and even fewer to solar energy or other alternatives to oil. True, this is a book about oil, not energy; but in the real world oil cannot be discussed without reference to energy needs generally.

Shortly after World War II, with the recklessness of youth, I wrote a 100-page essay on oil. My knowledge was based on a dozen books, which was about all the serious literature in existence at the time, and on my reading of some of the professional journals such as *The Petroleum Press Service, The Oil and Gas Journal,* and *The Petroleum Times.* In those years, the annual oil production of Iraq was 3.5 million tons, Kuwait's was 6 million tons, and no one had yet heard of Abu Dhabi or North Sea oil. World production was small, and the important facts about oil could indeed be summarized in about a hundred pages. Today, of course, the consumption of oil is far greater; oil profits and the literature on energy have grown exponentially, and it has become virtually impossible to master all the ramifications in one or two volumes. It would be unfair, in other words, to blame Yergin for concentrating on the more dramatic aspects of his story, rather than on an exhaustive, encyclopedic survey—which, for all one knows, is no longer possible.

A more serious criticism seems to me to apply, however, to the second part of his book. Like virtually all writers, Yergin tends to exaggerate the importance of his subject. Nobody is likely to argue in 1991 that oil is of no consequence. Still, has it really been the decisive factor in twentieth-century politics, as Yergin argues? Does our century really deserve to be called "the century of oil"? Is it true that in World War I the allies were swimming to victory on a wave of oil, or that oil was "central to the course and the outcome of World War II"? Was the capture of the Caucasian oil fields really among Hitler's most important strategic objectives?

These and similar statements appear throughout Yergin's book. It is not difficult, to be sure, to adduce quotations from Rommel or Patton to the effect that if they could only steal some gas, they would win the war. Yet such claims usually do not withstand closer examination. Among the factors that caused Germany's defeat in 1918, oil did not play the decisive role. Hitler's aims in the East were mainly agrarian; he wanted the Ukraine to provide bread for Greater Germany. The main German offensive in 1941 was directed against Moscow, and in 1942 the main blow was directed against Stalingrad, where there are no known oil fields; the decision to move to the Caucasus came as an afterthought and was halfhearted. Rommel did not lose the decisive battle of El Alamein mainly for lack of oil: he did not need much oil, since he was left with only about 120 modern tanks, which were wholly insufficient, of course, to occupy Egypt. Similarly, no amount of oil would have helped Patton win the war in 1944.

What about Japan? Wasn't the oil embargo the main reason for Pearl Harbor? In Japanese strategy, the acquisition of raw material (not just oil) played a more central role than in the case of Germany. But if the Japanese leaders had not made up their minds, even by August 1941, whether to expand toward the north

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(where there was no oil) or toward the south, if at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor they forgot to bomb the fuel reservoirs of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the second-most-important target, then oil could not have been the decisive issue in Japanese strategy.

It is true that by the end of the war Germany had run out of oil, but this was not the main reason for its defeat. Oil did not figure very prominently in the cold war, it was only one of several central issues in the Suez war of 1956, and it was certainly not the decisive factor in the war between Iran and Iraq. In sum: oil power as such has been an illusion. (This is a conclusion that Yergin seems, on one or two occasions, almost to accept.) Not oil, but the exploitation of oil by ambitious, expansive movements such as Pan-Arabism or Islamic fundamentalism is what may lead to major conflicts.

If there has been a "century of oil," in other words, it started in 1973. How long is it likely to last? The oil revenues of the Arab states and Iran were a mere $20 billion in 1973. They rose elevenfold during the next few years, but they declined to $60 billion in 1986. Precisely because of the steep increase in oil prices, however, oil demand (in terms of general commercial energy consumption) has declined from 48 percent to 40 percent. And events in the Middle East will lead to a further decline. The waste of oil in the United States and the cheap price of gasoline have been the main reasons for the continuing Western dependence on oil. It is one of the few foreseeable benefits of the present conflict that this dependence will now diminish.

President Bush has told us that at the end of the twentieth century oil is central to the very nature of our civilization. Yergin agrees. There is some truth in this, unfortunately; but it is no less true that the vulnerability of the West is much greater than it needs to be. It has been obvious for a long time that the "oil weapon" would be used by some producers, and long ago prudence should have dictated a more cautious energy strategy. Yergin has devoted little space to the main problems now facing the industrial world. It is instructive and entertaining to read about the Tarikis and Yamanis, the "mystery men" who have replaced the Deterdings and the Gulbenkians as the darlings of the journalists, but the truly important issues—such as how to reduce Western dependence on imported oil—do not lend themselves easily to serious discussion on television.

Toward the end of his book, Yergin concludes that oil has brought out the best and the worst of civilization. One half of his statement I am willing to accept without reservation. Who has benefitted from the oil industry? The shareholders of the companies (most of the time), the prospectors, and the energy consultants. Norway, which used to be the poorest of the Scandinavian countries, is the richest, and for a while the British economy substantially benefitted from North Sea oil. But most people in the Middle East are as poor as they were before, even as some oil sheikhs gamble away millions of dollars in a single night in Monte Carlo. Oil had brought few blessings, certainly, to Kuwait, and for all one knows there may be similar fates in store for the other Gulf Arabs. Without oil revenues, the war between Iran and Iraq would not have lasted for so many years. Without oil revenues, Saddam Hussein would not have been able to amass weapons of mass destruction and become a menace out of all proportion to the importance of his country.

Oil has caused enormous environmental damage in the West and East, moreover, polluting the air and the oceans. Oil has brought ecological destruction to Baku, and more recently to Tyumen and the oil producing regions of Siberia. Oil has not brought riches to the Soviet Union, Mexico, Romania, or Algeria, or even to Venezuela or Libya. Yes, oil enabled Gulbenkian and Getty to collect great pictures and other objets d'art; but this is hardly tantamount to bringing out the best in civilization. But why blame oil, for that matter? It is merely a black liquid, neither good nor bad. Gibbon may have been wrong to claim that history is little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind, but for the history of this liquid, his description fits.

WALTER LAQUEUR is the author most recently of *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations* (Scribners).

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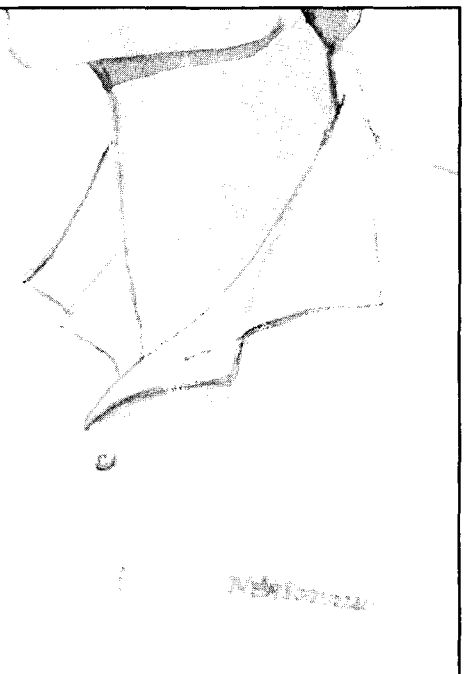

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

sues. In short, rather than indulge in polemics, he gives one something to think about. I noted one minor error, however. The call to "re-enter modernity in the fullness of its enduring ambiguity" is mis-attributed. Although it originally referred to Baudelaire and is again cited in that connection by Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik in the show's catalog, the phrase is mine, not Baudelaire's.

ROBERT STORR
New York, New York

The writer is curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art.

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Dying myths

I'D PLANNED TO GO THIS WEEK with Yo-Yo Ma to Israel, where he was to play with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. But, like other carriers, Lufthansa stopped flying to Tel Aviv, and in the end the IPO itself canceled the concerts. It was simply too perilous to allow large numbers of people to congregate when Iraq was targeting civilians. Still, I felt strangely like a deserter, abandoning friends and disappointing my ancestors. So I tried to get a seat on El Al, any day, any class. It was completely booked. Maybe it's not strange that adversity draws the steadfast back to Zion. Yet this doesn't quite explain the fact that, even now, some 2,000 Jews from the USSR arrive every day in Israel, apparently preferring the bombs of Saddam Hussein to the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev. The influx proves the Zionist vision remains not only viable but vital. Indeed, with every other utopianism collapsing, Zionism turns out to be one of the most truly tenacious, and successful, political movements of our time. Remember the recent spate of television programs and magazine articles about "the end of the dream"? Well, that turns out to have been one of those media clichés purporting profundity but motivated by malice, as truthful as other libels against the Jews, only more ephemeral, like, say, a Peter Jennings broadcast.

THIS ISN'T THE ONLY MYTH DEbunked by the pressure of events. There were, of course, the pecuniary predictions: that, once war started, the price of oil would go to $60 a barrel—no, make that $100—and the markets would nosedive. Then there were the geopolitical projections: that if we went to war our European allies would jump ship, and even if they didn't the Arabs certainly would. But the commentators' hopes were never more apparent than in the prophecies of doom for the coalition if Israel were at all enmeshed in the battle. As it happens, the dispatch of Patriot missiles to Israel, with U.S. personnel to man them, binds the Jewish state to the anti-Iraq alliance more vividly and concretely than any military move from Jerusalem ever could. And, lo, not a word of demurral, not even from Syria. Of course, Arab mobs may yet hit the streets to vent their hatred for America. Anything is possible in rent-a-crowd politics. But my guess is that if our forces win decisively, the "masses," whom the pundits so glibly pontificate about, will quickly get used to the fact that Saddam can do nothing for them. They already know that they are safer than they were before January 16. Better the dominion of the dynasts than of the despots.

THERE WILL BE EXCEPTIONS TO this response, and the exceptions will be primarily among the Palestinians who, as Sabra Chartrand put it in *The New York Times* last Monday, "often seek inspiration in rumors." Edward Said said as much in the *Times* the week before, as TNR noted editorially last week. In words that would get me labeled a racist if I'd written them, Said declared: "Today's Arab media are a disgrace. . . . Allegory, complicated symbolism, and innuendo substitute for common sense." In fact, Said may be the most noted American purveyor of these substitutes and, as such, has been an apologist for what he himself calls the "remorseless Arab propensity to violence and extremism." This propensity is not unrecognized by the Israelis, sitting in their rooms sealed against poison gas. They've seen it now again in the joy with which many Palestinians—and particularly the PLO—have greeted the showering of Iraqi Scuds on innocent Israeli life. But, then, the Palestinians also cheered when Iraq savaged Kuwait. The world has seen this, too, and it has been reminded of the murderous neighborhood in which Israel exists. So here is another myth that is being eroded—that Palestinian political culture is moderate and open to reason.

A MYTH ALL TO ITSELF IS JORDAN, whose little king has tied his country's fate to Iraq's. (He lost the West Bank in 1967, after teaming up with Nasser). After huffing and puffing about how he'd punish any country that violated Jordanian air space, he told a press conference in Amman, with a straight face, that he didn't know anything about the Iraqi missiles that had overflown Jordan on their mission to Tel Aviv. Perhaps he should seek more inspiration in rumors.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT, HERE'S ANother myth. Since Vietnam we've all lived with the notion that the U.S. armed forces won't do anything good and can't do anything well. The Gulf war deflates these haughty certitudes, to which liberals have been particularly prey. The encounter with Iraq goes far toward settling the argument about high-tech armaments. Many of them actually work, and they save lives on both sides of the conflict. The words won't come easily. But this is a reason to be grateful for the Reagan arms buildup. (Another is that it forced the Soviets to come to terms with their own bankruptcy as a society.) The fact is, sorry to say, we will have to look again at SDI—not because it will build us an astrodome shield against nuclear weapons, but because it will help us protect against the next generation of ground-to-ground missiles, the favored technology of the crazy states. This will be disappointing to the anti-Pentagon phalanx in Congress who seem nostalgic for World War II weapons, dirty though they were, as if these weapons could somehow restore the clarity of World War II moral choices.

THE WAR IN THE GULF MAY INdeed mark a turning point in American history. From it we may trace a restoration of national will and a recognition of national competence. There's little chance that even a great victory would provoke us to jingoist recklessness. Ours is a prudent nation, slow to be at arms. But there are times when to be at arms is the essence of both prudence and morality. Even though George Bush has not made the case very eloquently, he understood this, and, to our surprise as much as anyone's, carried the people with him. The country has seen through the disingenuousness of some of those who argued for giving sanctions more time. Three months? Six? The public grasped that many of those who were against force now would be against force always. I saw on television a few days ago that Ted Kennedy went to visit Fort Devens, where reservists who had been called up were training. He gave them the usual tired blather about how he now supports our troops in the Gulf. They stiffed him, without a smile, without so much as a word, without, in fact, looking up at all. It was as if Colonel Lindbergh had wandered into a World War II Army barracks to chat up the troops. They'd have had nothing to say to him, and he really nothing to them.

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